

NEWS IN brief

Migrant breach briefly closes Channel Tunnel

More than 100 migrants stormed the Channel Tunnel early yesterday, penetrating a third of the way through in an incident which halted traffic overnight. The incident came as the daily flow of thousands of migrants and refugees flocking to Europe's shores showed little sign of easing, with 168,000 migrants and refugees arriving in September alone, UN figures showed.

Drone market to hit \$10 billion by 2024

The market for military drones is expected to almost double by 2024 to beyond \$10 billion (8.9 billion euros), according to a report published Friday by specialist defence publication IHS Jane's Intelligence Review. "The global defence and security market for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) will expand at 5.5 percent per year over this decade, from the current figure of \$6.4 billion," according to the analysis.

Australia shooting 'an act of terrorism': PM

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday said that a Sydney attack in which a 15-year-old gunman shot dead a civilian police employee appeared to have been an act of terrorism. Police said the teen, who they did not name, was shot dead in an exchange of fire with officers after he killed finance worker Curtis Cheng at close range outside the New South Wales force's headquarters in western Sydney on Friday.

Kerry holds Iran talks with Iran FM

US Secretary of State John Kerry held an impromptu meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif in New York on Friday to discuss steps to implement the Iran nuclear deal. US officials did not provide details, saying only that the talks focused on implementing the historic deal reached in July to curb Iran's nuclear program.

Dalai Lama brushes off health fears

The Dalai Lama said he was in "excellent" health yesterday after doctors told him to scrap a tour of the United States as he returned to his home in northern India. The 80-year-old Tibetan spiritual leader walked unaided from this plane after it landed at Dharamsala airport and spoke with a small group of followers who had gathered to welcome him back, before telling reporters that there was no cause for concern.



Rescue team members and volunteers search for mudslide victims in Santa Catarina Pinula, on the outskirts of Guatemala City, on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

GUATEMALA LANDSLIDE Dozens dead, hundreds missing

At least 30 people were dead and several hundred missing Friday a day after a landslide smashed through a village on the outskirts of the Guatemalan capital, officials said. More than 500 rescue workers, police and soldiers, as well as desperate residents, clawed away at the debris with picks and shovels searching for survivors all day and into the late evening, before suspending the painstaking hunt for the night. Families reported receiving text messages from people they believed to still be trapped, more than 24 hours after the landslide struck the village of El Cambray II, in the municipality of Santa Catarina Pinula. Authorities said that about 600 people are missing and they expect the death toll to rise. Their estimate is based on the 125 homes that Thursday's landslide destroyed or damaged after heavy rain. The affected area is about 15 kilometers (10 miles) east of the capital Guatemala City. The victims include at least three children. Thirty-four people were pulled out alive from the mud and rubble, while 25 others were injured, CONRAD officials said. The impact of the heavy rain was exacerbated by a nearby river, officials said. Municipal authorities had urged the community several times to relocate, most recently in November last year.

Obama warns Putin of Syria 'quagmire'

Russia keeps pounding ISIS strongholds despite West's concerns

US President Barack Obama warned Russia that its bombing campaign against Syrian rebels will suck Moscow into a "quagmire," as Moscow pressed on with its bombing campaign in Syria. On the ground, Russian air strikes destroyed an Islamic State command post near Raqa among other targets, the defence ministry said yesterday. "Over the past 24 hours SU-34 and SU-24M jets of the Russian airborne formation in Syria made more than 20 sorties over nine Islamic State infrastructure facilities," the defence ministry said. SU-34 fighters jet dropped a concrete busting BETAB-500 bomb on a command post in the area of ISIS stronghold Raqa, releasing video of the strike. SU-24 bombers also destroyed a ware-



house that stored ammunition in the mountains near the city of Jisr al-Shughur in Idlib province in northwestern Syria. SU-34 fighter jets also targeted a training camp belonging to the Islamic State group near the town of Maaret al-Numan in Idlib province and destroyed ammunition and equipment, the ministry said. Russian unmanned aerial vehicles continue to monitor the areas under control of the Islamic State group, the statement said. Russia on Wednesday launched air strikes in Syria, its first major military engagement outside the former Soviet Union since the occupation of Afghanistan in 1979. Washington has accused Russia of striking moderate rebels fighting against the embattled Syrian president under cover of a claimed assault on ISIS militants. Obama on Friday warned that Moscow's aggressive military campaign in Syria was a "recipe for disaster." At a White House news conference, Obama frequently assailed Russian President Vladimir Putin, who he accused of acting out of a position of weakness to defend a crumbling, authoritarian ally. just going to get them stuck in a quagmire and it won't work," Obama said. Russian President Vladimir Putin "doesn't distinguish between ISIL and a moderate Sunni opposition that wants to see Mr Assad go," Obama told reporters, referring to the self-proclaimed Islamic State group. "From their perspective, they're all terrorists. And that's a recipe for disaster," he added. The Syria campaign comes at a low point in Russia's relations with the West, a year after the United States and EU imposed financial sanctions on Moscow for annexing territory from Ukraine. Western countries and Russia say they have a common enemy in Islamic State. But they also have very different allies and opposing views of how to resolve a war that has killed at least 250,000 people and driven more than 10 million from their homes. Washington and its allies oppose both Islamic State and Assad, blaming him for attacks on civilians that have radicalized the opposition and insisting that he has no place in a post-war settlement. Russia and Iran see Assad as the capable force to fight extremism on the ground.



Migrants pass a cornfield as they walk to cross the border into Croatia, near Sid, Serbia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Germany seeks strength from past to deal with refugees

Germany yesterday celebrated 25 years since its joyful reunification, with its leaders urging the nation to muster the same strength and solidarity to face a record refugee influx. The silver anniversary of the day communist East Germany and the capitalist West reunited as one country comes with Europe's top economy standing at a crossroads. Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Joachim Gauck, both of whom grew up under communism, attended ceremonies in the business capital Frankfurt with the resonant slogan "Overcoming Borders." In the keynote speech, Gauck focused on the refugee crisis and called on Germans to recapture the same can-do spirit that gripped the country in the heady months between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the remarriage of east and west. "Today we celebrate the courage and self-confidence of that time. Let us use this memory as a bridge," said Gauck, who was a dissident pastor in East Germany. "In 1990 too, there was the legitimate question: 'Are we up to this challenge?' Then too, there was no example from history to follow. And nevertheless, millions of people took on the national task of unification and made Germany into a country that was more than the sum of its parts." Merkel, who will mark 10 years in power in November, is grappling with the arrival this year of up to one million people fleeing war and hardship. Buoyed by a robust economy and job market, voters have largely backed her policy of extending help. However as the numbers have grown, Merkel's popularity has slipped as she comes under fire from critics at home and abroad for her willing acceptance of the burden on Europe. Merkel yesterday said the migrant crisis represented an epochal test for the European Union. "Twenty-five years on, we are facing great challenges with the issue of refugees," she told reporters in Frankfurt. "Now too, we Germans will not be able to solve the problem on our own but only with Europe, with a fair division of the burden, and with the rest of the world." But some countries have resisted Berlin's bid for the mantle of European leadership. On October 3, 1990, just under a year after the Berlin Wall was pulled down in a bloodless revolution, the reunification treaty bringing the two halves of the country together came into effect amid jubilant scenes. Ever since, this date has been a public holiday to mark Germany's national day.

UKRAINE CRISIS Rivals announce start of small arms withdrawal

Warring sides in Ukraine yesterday began withdrawing tanks and smaller weapons from a buffer zone in the war-torn east a day after the leaders of France and Germany met Vladimir Putin for peace talks. The announcement of the beginning of the small-arms withdrawal came after Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko voiced cautious optimism over the future of a peace deal but said the war was not over. "There is a truce," he told reporters after more than four hours of talks in Paris. "The war will be over when the last patch of Ukrainian land is liberated. As long as there is occupied territory the war is not over." Both government forces and rebels from the self-proclaimed Lugansk People's Republic yesterday said that the withdrawal of tanks and smaller weapons would begin imminently. But their fellow rebels from the neighbouring Donetsk People's Republic said they would follow suit after October 18 if the ceasefire holds. Moscow-backed rebels and government forces had this week agreed to withdraw tanks as well as light weapons from a buffer zone beginning Saturday to shore up the brittle ceasefire. The pullback builds on a Western-backed peace deal agreed in the Belarusian capital Minsk in February.

Blasts near Nigeria capital kill 18

Two explosions that ripped through the outskirts of Nigeria's capital Abuja have left at least 18 people dead and 41 wounded, the National Emergency Management Agency said yesterday. "The death toll is now 18 because three people died in the hospitals this morning while 41 others were injured and are receiving treatment in the hospitals," NEMA spokesman Sani Datti told AFP. The agency had earlier given a death toll of 15 and 41 wounded following the blasts late on Friday near police station in Kuje and at a bus stop in Nyanya, in an area previously targeted by the Boko Haram Islamist group. Datti told AFP a rescue operation ended Friday night. "We have completed evacuation of the victims. What is left now is to allow the special anti-bomb unit of the police to do their job. They are combing the scenes for fragments of explosives for their investigation," he said. He said the entire area had been cordoned off. The police yesterday said the bombings were the handiwork of suicide bombers. "Preliminary investigations revealed the bomb blasts were carried out by two suicide bombers -- a male and a female," the police said in a statement. It said the Inspector-General of Police, Solomon Arase, had ordered massive stop-and-search activities in the city and advised residents not to panic.

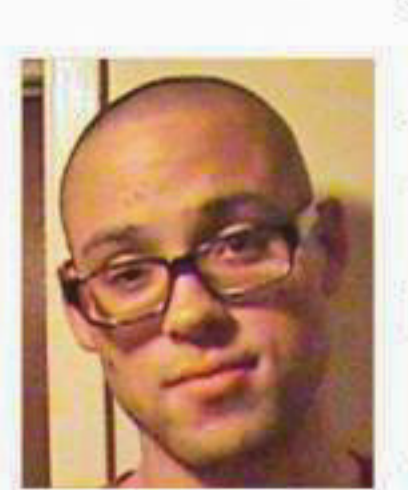


TERRORISM Malala questions 'silence' of Pakistani leaders

Questioning the 'silence' of Pakistani leaders on terrorism, 18-year-old Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai yesterday said she harbours the hope of becoming the Prime Minister of her country. Malala, who was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with New Delhi-based child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi last year, also expressed her desire to visit India. Malala, who survived an extremist attack on her in Pakistan's restive Swat valley for promoting education, said she will continue her activism and termed slain former Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto as a major inspiration. "Many people denied that a woman can be a leader. She (Bhutto) has shown that a woman can be a leader," she told India Today TV channel in an interview. Asked if like Bhutto she would like to become the prime minister of Pakistan, she said, "Hopefully, if people vote. But my dream is to help children to get education." However, she also added that "there are more ways to bring change in society." "Why are they (Pakistani leadership) silent if terrorism is happening in Swat valley? Why are they silent if girls are denied education or women are flogged on the streets?" she asked. Malala, whose life is the subject of an upcoming film, further said that she cannot tolerate women being denied the right to have an identity and girls being denied education.

Oregon shooting: Gunman had 13 guns, all bought legally

The gunman who killed nine people in a shooting rampage at a college in Oregon had 13 weapons, federal agents said. Dressed in a flak jacket, Chris Harper Mercer brought six guns to Umpqua Community College in Roseburg and opened fire on Thursday morning. Another seven weapons were found at his home. All 13 were bought legally. Police have released the names of the victims, who ranged in age from 18 to 67. The oldest was a teacher. Survivors have been telling their stories. Medicine student Sharon Kirkham told the BBC her friend Kim died in her arms after being shot three times. "I heard her gasping for air, but I couldn't save her," she said. President Obama reiterated his anger at gun violence at a press conference on Friday, calling on the public to press their politicians to support reform. "You've got to be a single issue voter on this, because that's what happening on the other side," he said, referring to the National Rifle Association's lobbying power. Mr Obama said the NRA were "effective but don't represent the American people". Mercer enlisted in the army in 2008, but was discharged after less than a month in basic training, for reasons unknown. It is unclear why he carried out the killings. Two victims have said religion was an issue - the gunman asked his victims to state their religion and shot dead the Christians. His father, Ian Mercer, said he was "just as shocked as everybody" by his son's actions. In an online profile appearing to belong to the gunman, he listed hobbies including the internet and "killing zombies", described his politics as "conservative, Republican" and said he was spiritual but not religious. His social media profiles also suggested he took a keen interest in other mass shootings. "The more people you kill, the more you're in the limelight," he said in one post, referring to Vester Flanagan, who shot and killed two journalists during a live broadcast in Virginia in the summer.



Top, Afghan MSF surgeons work in an undamaged part of the MSF hospital in Kunduz after the operating theatres were destroyed in an air strike. Bottom, Fires burn in part of the hospital. A suspected US air strike on the hospital killed 16 people yesterday, medical charity MSF said, a bombardment that the UN condemned as "inexcusable, and possibly even criminal". (Story on page 16)



PHOTO: AFP