

# NEWSIN brief

## King rejects suggestion of hajj organiser role

King Salman yesterday rejected any suggestions that Saudi Arabia should give up its role as the organiser of the hajj following last month's deadly stampede in Mina. "The irresponsible statements aiming for political exploitation of the incident... shall not affect the role of Saudi Arabia, its duty and responsibilities in serving the guests of God," the king said in a statement carried by SPA state news agency.

## Egypt court orders Mubarak's sons release

An Egyptian court yesterday ordered the release of ousted president Hosni Mubarak's two sons who were sentenced to three years in jail for corruption, a judicial official and their lawyer said. The court ordered Alaa and Gamal Mubarak to be released after having taken into account time served since their arrest in 2011, the judicial official and defence lawyer Farid al-Deeb said.

## UK police end Assange embassy guard

British police yesterday said they will no longer stand guard outside London's Ecuadorian embassy where WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange took refuge in 2012, but will strengthen a "covert plan" to prevent his departure. Britain's Foreign Office later confirmed that it had summoned the Ecuadorian ambassador to "register once again our deep frustration at the protracted delay" in extraditing Assange to Sweden to face questions over a rape allegation.

## British troops killed in Kabul chopper crash

Two Britons were among five Nato troops killed in a helicopter crash in Kabul, a second blow for British forces Sunday after a Taliban suicide bomber targeted their convoy in the capital. The incidents came just two weeks after the resurgent militant group overran the key northern city of Kunduz, their biggest military victory in 14 years of war.

## Rebels accuse pope of stacking synod cards

Conservative cardinals have accused Pope Francis of stacking the cards against them in an ongoing battle over issues including the Church's approach to gays and to divorced and remarried believers, it emerged yesterday. In a letter sent to the pontiff on October 5, a group of 13 cardinals described procedures for three weeks of discussions as "designed to facilitate predetermined results on important disputed questions."

## South Korea to control history in textbooks

South Korea's government has announced controversial plans to control the history textbooks used in secondary schools. Currently, secondary schools can choose from textbooks published by eight different publishing companies. However, the government says that from 2017, all secondary schools must only use history textbooks issued by the state.

The move has sparked fierce criticism from academics and opposition parties. The government has argued that current history textbooks are too left-leaning and encourage anti-American and pro-North Korea feelings, the BBC's Kevin Kim in Seoul reports.



Palestinian protestors stand behind burning tires as they clash with Israeli security forces at the Hawara checkpoint, south of the West Bank city of Nablus yesterday. Three new stabbings in Jerusalem and a car attack spread more fear among Israelis as Palestinian unrest showed little sign of slowing after nearly two weeks of violence.

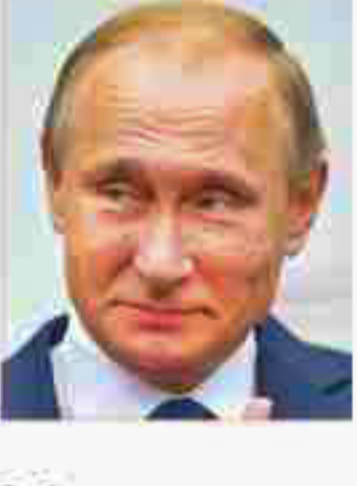
# Three new stabbings in Jerusalem

Three new stabbings in Jerusalem and a car attack spread more fear among Israelis yesterday as Palestinian unrest showed little sign of slowing after nearly two weeks of violence. Frustrated Palestinian youths have defied president Mahmud Abbas as well as an Israeli security crackdown by rioting in annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank, while 18 stabbings having targeted Jews since October 3. There have been warnings of the risk of a full-scale Palestinian uprising, or third intifada. Stabbing attacks have killed two Israelis and wounded around 20. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "knife terror will not defeat us" as he addressed parliament amid Palestinian unrest and a wave of stabbing attacks targeting Jews. Netanyahu spoke at a new session of parliament was opened, saying Israel had overcome previous waves of bombings, a reference to earlier Palestinian uprisings or intifadas. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki yesterday accused Israel of seeking to spark "a third intifada", as violence again flared in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. "(Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu wants to instigate a third intifada. He wants to avoid problems that he is facing in the political and diplomatic arena, where he has failed miserably," Malki told AFP in Vienna. In yesterday's first stabbing, an 18-year-old Palestinian identified as Mustafa al-Khatib attacked a policeman with a knife at an entrance to Jerusalem's Old City and was shot dead by security forces.

# Putin defends Syria air strikes

Says Russia aims to stabilise the authority of Assad

President Vladimir Putin has defended Russia's military operations in Syria, saying the aim is to "stabilise the legitimate authority" of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Russia wants to "create conditions for a political compromise" in Syria, he told Russian state TV. Yesterday, the EU's foreign affairs chief, Federica Mogherini, called Russia's role "a game-changer". She said: "It has some very worrying elements." EU ministers are discussing Syria now. Going into the Luxembourg meeting, several foreign ministers stressed that air strikes should only target so-called Islamic State (IS) fighters and other Islamist "terrorists". The US and UK governments have accused Russia of attacking mainly "moderate" anti-Assad groups, rather than the jihadists. Putin denied that that was the case. "The interventions against Daesh (IS) have to be clearly against Daesh and other terrorist groups, as defined by the UN," Mogherini stressed. Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn also said "the target is IS and nothing else". Mogherini said she was especially worried about recent violations of Turkish airspace by Russian jets. Syrian forces are said to have made significant advances against rebels. Government gains in Idlib, Hama and Latakia provinces were on Sunday reported both by the Syrian government and opposition activists. The main battlefield is currently close to the key highway that links the capital with other major cities, including Aleppo. Assad's forces are believed to be seeking to cut off rebels in Idlib. Assad's government was currently "under siege", he said, adding that militants were "at the edge of Damascus". He also urged other nations to "unite efforts against this evil (terrorism)".



# Modi seeks to cement power

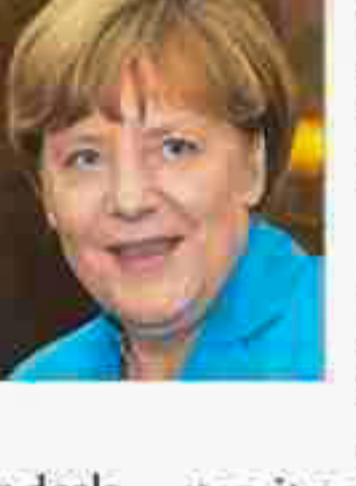
AFP, Samastipur

India's poorest state of Bihar began voting yesterday in a high-stakes election which Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes will help his government push through a faltering reform drive. The Indian leader, who has promised billions of dollars for development in Bihar, urged people to come out and vote "in large numbers" as polls opened in the first phase of the election. "I want jobs for the young people of Bihar," he told a campaign rally yesterday. "Bihar must become the strength of our nation." Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a landslide victory in general elections last year, but its promised reforms have been blocked in the upper house of parliament where it lacks a majority. Modi's ruling coalition, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, is hoping to take control of Bihar, where two-thirds of people lack access to electricity. "What is most important for us is jobs," college student Sangeeta told reporters outside a polling booth.

# Angela Merkel defends refugee policy

Says it is part of basic humanity of Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday defended her open-door policy to refugees in the face of falling poll ratings, saying it was "part of the basic humanity of our country". It was not her job to "spread worry" but "to work on finding solutions to the problems", Merkel told mass-market daily Bild in a lengthy interview. She voiced understanding for citizens' fears given the record influx, expected to reach 800,000 to one million this year. But she stressed that "for me it is part of the basic humanity of our country that one deals with a refugee in a friendly way, as with every other human being". Asked whether she could imagine sheltering a refugee at her home, however, she said: "Although I have great respect for the people who do that, I could not imagine that for me now."



# Senior leaders unite against Malaysia PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Influential former Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad and some key ruling party members demanded yesterday that embattled Prime Minister Najib Razak answer a barrage of corruption allegations. On the same day, a whistle-blower and his lawyer detained for their efforts to expose graft allegations against Najib were charged with attempting to "sabotage" the country's banking sector. Critics want Najib to explain massive sums allegedly missing from state-owned development company 1MDB which he launched, as well as the revelation in July that nearly \$700 million in mysterious transfers had been made to his personal bank accounts. "Unless somebody speaks up, the government will get away with doing all kinds of wrong things," Mahathir told a press conference, according to The Star newspaper. "So they may take action against me or any one of us but somebody has to take the risk to voice our disquiet, anger and feeling that the government is not looking after the interests of this country." Joining Mahathir, Malaysia's leader from 1981-2003, at the press conference were several heavyweights from the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which has held power since 1957, including party deputy president and the country's former deputy premier, Muhyiddin Yassin.

# Trump won't be next US president

Says Obama

President Barack Obama is fairly certain of one thing when it comes to next year's election: Donald Trump won't succeed him in the White House. The billionaire businessman, the frontrunner in the race to become the Republican party's White House nominee, has raised hackles with his controversial comments on immigration, gun control and women, among other issues. "He knows how to get attention. He is, you know, the classic reality TV character, and at this early stage, it's not surprising that he's gotten a lot of attention," Obama said of Trump in an interview on CBS television's "60 Minutes" news program. "I don't think he'll end up being president of the United States," Obama said in the interview, which aired on Sunday. Trump's incendiary comments on immigration and other issues have dominated the campaign and offended many Americans, but he nevertheless has seen his poll numbers climb steadily higher. During a speech to Latino political leaders last week, Obama condemned the logic of "saying clearly inflammatory things and then saying, 'Well that's not what I meant' - until you do it again and again." "Leadership is not fanning the flames of intolerance, and then acting all surprised when a fire breaks out," he added. Obama did not name Trump directly during that speech, instead denouncing the overall tone of the Republican presidential field.



Nepal's President Ram Baran Yadav administers the oath of office to Nepal's newly elected Deputy Prime Ministers Kamal Bahadur Thapa and Bijay Kumar Gachhadar in presence of the vice president Parmanand Jha and newly elected Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli at the presidential building "Shital Niwas" in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

# UK failing to help Muslim victims of hate crime: study

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Muslim victims of hate crimes often receive no support from their fellow citizens and are left feeling reluctant to report attacks as a result, according to a new study. An in-depth survey of the experiences of British Muslims targeted because of their faith found that many are left feeling trapped after suffering verbal or physical abuse. They also discover that few people are willing to intervene or lend support in their defence. Researchers cited one incident where a woman wearing a headscarf was assaulted by a group of men while travelling on a busy train, having alcohol poured over her clothing to chants of "We are racist, we are racist and we love it", and no one in the carriage intervened. Another interviewee claimed he asked for police to be called after receiving death threats on a bus but the driver refused to intervene. A Muslim midwife resigned from her job after suffering abuse from patients which left her feeling "a lot people hate me". The study by academics at Birmingham City University and Nottingham Trent University, commissioned by the charity Tell Mama, said many interviewees now considered receiving abuse in the street or online to be "normal" and live in fear of "trolling" on social media turning into attacks in real life. Campaigners said there was a need for improvements to the way online abuse is reported with too little importance being given by social media companies to attacks that do not contain threats of violence. Based on interviews with 20 Muslims from varied backgrounds, including "white" converts, the researchers found that attacks tended to be focused on those easily identified as Muslims, in particular women wearing headscarves.



# Do not trust Putin, prepare for worst

Says Poroshenko

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko yesterday warned he had no trust in Russia's Vladimir Putin and urged the army to prepare "for the worst" despite a new truce in the separatist east. "I do not trust Putin at all," Poroshenko said in televised comments. "I do not trust his puppets and I do not trust their promises at all", Poroshenko said in reference to the insurgents in the Lugansk and Donetsk regions. Poroshenko added: "Each moment, we should be prepared for the worst". The pro-Western Ukrainian leader's comments to servicemen in Kiev came ahead of this week's Defenders of the Fatherland Day.

# China in search for alien life

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Chinese scientists are constructing the world's biggest radio telescope, which will be more effective than any other at picking up weak messages from outer space that could be linked to intelligent life. Assembly of the Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope, or FAST, began in July and is expected to be completed in 2016. Once finished, the reflector dish of the telescope will be 500 metres in diameter, replacing Puerto Rico's Arecibo Observatory, only 300 metres in diameter, as the world's largest. The wider the dish, the more effective the telescope becomes at picking up weak messages from outer space. Nan Rendong, the chief scientist of the FAST project, told the Xinhua news agency: "A radio telescope is like a sensitive ear, listening to tell meaningful radio messages from white noise in the universe. It is like identifying the sound of cicadas in a thunderstorm." Rather than sitting above ground, the telescope's dish is sunken into a natural bowl-shaped valley in China's Guizhou province.

