

NEWS IN brief

Romania ex-leader faces 'crimes against humanity' trial

A Romanian court has begun a probe into former president Ion Iliescu for alleged crimes against humanity over the violent suppression of protests in 1990, months after the fall of the Communist regime, prosecutors said yesterday. The 85-year-old is accused over the violent crackdown on an opposition movement that staged sit-ins blocking downtown Bucharest for several weeks in mid-1990, just six months after the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu's Communist regime.

US 'terror clock' teen moving to Qatar

The Texas boy arrested for bringing to school a homemade clock that was mistaken for a bomb is moving to Qatar, his family said on Tuesday, a few hours after he was at the White House for an astronomy night hosted by President Barack Obama. Ahmed Mohamed, 14, a bespectacled ninth-grader who became an Internet sensation for an arrest that supporters said was influenced by bias against his Muslim religion, has accepted an offer from the Qatar Foundation to study at its Young Innovators Program.

Malala always welcome in India: Shiv Sena

The Shiv Sena yesterday said it will always welcome child activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousufzai to India as she has stood up to terrorists. Malala had said recently that she wished to pay a visit to India, especially to Delhi and Mumbai, to inspire young girls there.



A migrant woman and three children rest on the ground after crossing the border from Croatia near Rigonce, Slovenia, yesterday. The EU yesterday called a mini summit with Balkan countries on the migrant crisis, as Slovenia became the latest state to buckle under a surge of refugees desperate to reach northern Europe before winter.

Iran nuke deal wins Khamenei's nod

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei explicitly endorsed a nuclear deal with world powers for the first time yesterday, but warned his president it contained weaknesses that must be guarded against. The agreement with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany will see a raft of trade sanctions against Iran lifted in return for curbs lasting up to 15 years on its atomic activities. Khamenei permitted the nuclear talks that led to the agreement but the diplomacy gained momentum after the election of President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate, in June 2013. The supreme leader's remarks on the nuclear deal came in a letter to Rouhani a week after a motion in Iran's parliament approved it, following months of often fierce opposition from hardliners about its terms. Khamenei, who has the last word on all policy matters said he had approved the decision of the country's top security committee, the Supreme National Security Council, to implement the deal. However he told Rouhani that the agreement had "many ambiguities and structural weaknesses" which must be closely monitored and he repeated his long-held stance that the United States cannot be trusted. The lifting of sanctions is conditional on Iran putting stringent curbs on its nuclear programme, including on its enrichment of uranium, the processing of which at high purities can produce bomb material. The main provisions of the agreement, known officially as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Outcry as Netanyahu blames Holocaust on Palestinians

UN chief 'not optimistic' after talks with Netanyahu, Abbas

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday faced criticism for saying a Palestinian leader persuaded the Nazis to carry out the Holocaust as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council on that he was "not optimistic" following talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to urge them to defuse tensions, a diplomat said. Netanyahu insisted Adolf Hitler had only wanted to expel Jews from Europe, but that Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini told him: "Burn them." However, the chief historian at Israel's memorial to the Holocaust said this account was factually incorrect. A senior Palestinian official meanwhile said it showed Netanyahu hated Palestinians so much he was willing to absolve Hitler. Husseini met Hitler in Berlin in November 1941, when he tried to persuade the Nazi leader to declare his support for the creation of an Arab state, according to German press reports at the time. But in a speech at the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem on Tuesday,

Netanyahu gave a different account. "Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time - he wanted to expel the Jews," the Israeli prime minister said. "And Haj Amin al-Husseini went to Hitler and said: 'If you expel them, they'll all come here.'" "So what should I do with them?" he [Hitler] asked. He [Husseini] said: 'Burn them.' Ban addressed a closed-door emergency session of the council by video-conference from Amman, the latest stop on his mission to de-escalate the violence. The UN chief traveled to the region on Tuesday to urge the Israelis and Palestinians to pull back from a "dangerous escalation" that could lead to a full-scale Palestinian uprising. Ban told the council that addressing the situation at the holy sites was key to quelling tensions and that he was very concerned by incitement from both sides. Forty-seven Palestinians and one Arab Israeli have been killed in the upsurge in violence that began at the start of the month, including alleged attackers. Eight Israelis have died in attacks.



Russia pushes diplomacy

Syria's embattled President Bashar al-Assad has made a surprise visit to Moscow in his first overseas trip since his country's conflict erupted, meeting key ally President Vladimir Putin. Assad thanked Putin for launching air strikes in Syria against opponents seeking his overthrow, with both leaders also agreeing during the talks late Tuesday that military operations must be followed by political steps. As part of a flurry of diplomacy, Russia announced afterwards that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov would meet tomorrow with US Secretary of State John Kerry and their Turkish and Saudi counterparts to discuss Syria. Putin and Assad's talks focused mainly on military developments, with the Russian leader pledging ongoing support but also urging a political solution to end the war, the Kremlin said. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Assad's "working visit" was at the invitation of the Kremlin. The Syrian presidency yesterday said that Assad had returned to Damascus. Russia's foreign and defence ministers also participated in a

meeting between the two leaders. Putin said Russia was ready to do all it could to help secure peace in Syria, which has been ravaged by the conflict that began with anti-government protests in March 2011. More than 250,000 people have



ASSAD'S MOSCOW VISIT

DEVELOPMENTS Lavrov, Kerry to hold talks Friday with Saudi, Turkish FMs Russian military says struck 83 targets in Syria over past 24 hours

country's fate, a thinly veiled jab at the United States and other opposition backers who insist Assad must go in any peaceful settlement. After the talks, Russia said Lavrov would meet with his US, Saudi and Turkish counterparts to discuss Syria in Vienna on Friday. And Putin spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabia's King Salman about Assad's visit, the Kremlin said. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States are all key backers of the Syrian opposition and have criticised Moscow's military intervention in support of Assad's regime. The Russian defence ministry yesterday said its forces had hit 83 targets in Syria over the past 24 hours in five provinces. The strikes have been accompanied by a series of Syrian government ground offensives, in some places reportedly backed by an influx of Iranian forces, as well as Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah movement. Meanwhile, at least 13 people including medical staff were killed when Russian warplanes struck a field hospital in northwestern province of Idlib, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said



Prince William and his wife Catherine greet Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan as they arrive at Lancaster House in London yesterday, to attend a UK-China Creative Collaborations Summit. British Prime Minister David Cameron yesterday announced almost £40 billion in deals with China. Xi is on a four-day visit in Britain.

Won't accept limits on tactical nuclear arms

Pakistan to tell US as Sharif visits Obama

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will tell US President Barack Obama this week that Islamabad will not accept limits on its use of small tactical nuclear weapons, Pakistani officials said yesterday. Pakistan insists smaller weapons would deter a sudden attack by its bigger neighbour India. But the United States worries tactical weapons may further destabilise an already volatile region because their smaller size makes them more tempting to use in a conventional war. Sharif and Obama are due to meet today. The United States wants Pakistan to commit to not using tactical nuclear weapons but Islamabad wants to keep its options open as a way of deterring a potential Indian attack, said Maria Sultan, head of the South

Asian Strategic Stability Institute. Pakistan says the United States is demanding unreasonable limits on its use of nuclear weapons and not offering much in return apart from a hazy promise to consider Pakistan as a recognised recipient of nuclear technology. "Pakistan's nuclear programme is... India-centric. And it exists to make war a non-option... Tactical nuclear weapons block off this room (for war) completely," said a security official with knowledge of Pakistan's nuclear program. "No one can dictate what kind of weapons we will make or use." Pakistan and India, both nuclear powers, have fought three wars since becoming separate countries in 1947. Both claim the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir. India frequently accuses Pakistan of supporting militants operating on Indian territory.



Canada to pull out fighter jets from Syria, Iraq

Canadian Prime Minister-designate Justin Trudeau has confirmed he will withdraw Canadian fighter jets from the air strikes against Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. He informed US President Barack Obama of his decision hours after leading his Liberal Party to victory in the polls. As part of his election campaign, Trudeau pledged to bring home the CF-18 fighter jets that were deployed to the region until March 2016. He has not yet given a timescale. Trudeau, an ex-high-school teacher, is the eldest son of late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. However, he said he would keep Canadian military trainers in northern Iraq, the AFP news agency reports. Trudeau has also vowed to take in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the year - a move previously rejected by his predecessor Stephen Harper, who took a much harder line on the issue.

India, Maldives to sign pact to combat terror

India and Maldives, two of the eight member-countries of Saarc, will soon sign an agreement for cooperation on terrorism, transnational crime and other criminal matters. A meeting of the Indian Cabinet, presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, yesterday gave its approval for signing of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in criminal matters between India and Maldives. The treaty aims to enhance effectiveness of both the countries in investigation and prosecution of crime, through cooperation and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, an official statement said. In the context of transnational crime and its linkages to terrorism, the proposed treaty will provide a broad legal framework for bilateral cooperation with Maldives in investigation and prosecution of crime as well as in tracing, restraint and confiscation of proceeds, and instruments of crime as well as funds meant to finance terrorist acts. India is seeking a similar mutual legal assistance treaty with Bangladesh and the issue had come up for discussion when Indian Law Minister DV Sadananda Gowda had met Chief Justice of Bangladesh Surendra Kumar Sinha here on October 7. "The Indian Minister for Law and Justice expressed the view that our mutual interactions in legal matters will be further strengthened if India and Bangladesh are able to have a Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement," a Law Ministry statement had said.

Protests after 'dalits' burnt alive in India

Protesters have blocked a key highway in India to protest against the death of two children who were burnt alive in an arson attack near the capital Delhi. A toddler and a nine-month old died while asleep after their home in Faridabad town was set on fire early on Tuesday, allegedly by upper-caste men. The parents of the children were also injured. Three people were arrested and police said they were looking for nine others. Faridabad police commissioner Subhash Yadav told the AFP that the attack appeared to have been part of a long-running feud between the area's Dalit community and the higher Rajput caste, which also claimed the lives of three people a year ago.

Biden quits presidential hope

US Vice President Joe Biden yesterday announced he will not run for the White House in 2016, removing a potential obstacle to frontrunner Hillary Clinton's path to the Democratic presidential nomination. "I believe we're out of time, the time necessary to mount a winning campaign for the nomination," Biden said in the White House Rose Garden with President Barack Obama and his wife Jill at his side. "While I am not going to be a candidate, I will speak out clearly and forcefully as to where we stand as a party and where we need to go as a nation." The 72-year-old Biden said his family was still mourning the loss of his son Beau, who succumbed to brain cancer in May. He made an impassioned plea for more research and funding to put a stop to the disease. "Beau is our inspiration," Biden said, but added that while his family was working through the grieving process, the time to mount a viable campaign had run out. He delivered a vigorous defense of Obama's accomplishments and called



for Democrats and Republicans to work together. "Our nation will be making a tragic mistake if we walk away or attempt to un-do the Obama legacy. The American people have worked too hard, and we have come too far for that," he said. "Democrats should not only defend and protect this record, but they should run on the record," Biden added -- a comment seen by some as a possible dig at Clinton, who has come

out against a Pacific free trade deal she supported while serving as Obama's secretary of state. He urged Democrats and Republicans to "end the divisive partisan politics that is ripping this country apart." "It is mean-spirited and petty and it has gone on for much too long," he said. "I don't think that we should look at Republicans as our enemies. They are opposition. They are not our enemies. And for the sake of the country, we

ERRATUM

In our Wednesday's issue, a photo on migrants was inadvertently printed with an incorrect caption. We regret the error. The actual caption should have been: Migrants are being escorted by police as they make their way on foot on the outskirts of Brezice, Slovenia, yesterday.