

NEWS IN brief

Yemen war: 6 children killed, maimed daily

AFP, Geneva
Six children have been killed or maimed daily in Yemen since Saudi-led air strikes began a year ago, the UN said yesterday, warning the conflict was taking a horrifying toll on the country's youth. In a report marking the anniversary of the start of the Saudi-led campaign, the UN children's agency said nearly a third of the more than 3,000 civilians killed in Yemen were children.

'Falkland Islands in Argentine waters'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The United Nations has expanded Argentina's maritime territory to include the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands. This decision by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf was welcomed by Argentina, and gives the country fresh impetus in its continued claims to the British overseas territory. It will increase the size of Argentina's territory in the South Atlantic by 35 per cent. The Falkland Islands are self-governing but Britain is responsible for their defence and foreign affairs coming to their aid during an invasion by Argentina in 1982.

'Elderly population exploding globally'

AFP, Washington
The number of people globally aged 65 and over is expected to more than double by 2050 as the world's senior population continues to rocket, a US study said Monday. The global population is aging at an unprecedented rate with 8.5 percent of people worldwide -- or more than 600 million -- now aged 65 and over, said the US Census Bureau report. By 2050, global life expectancy at birth is projected to increase by almost eight years, from 68.6 years in 2015 to 76.2 years, the study said.

IS suicide bomber kills 3 in Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad
A suicide bomber detonated an explosive belt in central Baghdad yesterday morning, killing at least three people in an attack claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group, officials said. The bomber targeted workers gathered at Tayaran Square, also wounding at least 22 people, according to security and medical officials.



People gather after a fire broke out at a residential housing block in Ajman, UAE, yesterday. Firefighters brought the fire under control that broke out on Monday night, injuring five people. At least two towers of the 12-tower cluster were gutted. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

FBI breaks into iPhone of San Bernadino shooter

Drops Apple suit ending high-stake legal battle

AFP, Los Angeles
The FBI has unlocked the iPhone used by one of the San Bernardino terror attackers, officials said Monday, ending a heated legal standoff with Apple that had pitted US authorities against Silicon Valley.

Apple, backed by a broad coalition of technology giants like Google and Facebook, was fiercely opposed to assisting the US government in unlocking the iPhone on grounds it would have wide-reaching implications on digital security and privacy. A key court hearing scheduled earlier this month to hear arguments from both sides in the sensitive case was abruptly cancelled after the FBI said it no longer needed Apple's help because it had found an outside party to unlock the phone. Syed Farook and his wife Tashfeen Malik killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California on December 2 before dying in a firefight with police. Two other phones linked to the pair were found destroyed after the attack. "Our decision to conclude the litigation was based solely on the fact that, with the



recent assistance of a third party, we are now able to unlock that iPhone without compromising any information on the phone," US attorney Eileen Decker said in a statement. In a court filing asking that the case be dismissed, federal prosecutors said the US government had "successfully accessed the data stored on Farook's iPhone and therefore no longer requires assistance from Apple Inc." It was unclear who helped the FBI access the phone and what was stored on the device. But news reports have said the FBI may have sought assistance from an Israeli forensics company. In a statement late Monday, the FBI declined to say who that party was, or what technical steps were taken to unlock the phone. The goal of the probe is to determine if the California attackers worked with others, were targeting others and were supported by others, the FBI said. Apple said the FBI case should never have been brought before the courts and that the company would continue to increase the security of its products.

TERROR ATTACKS Belgium still hunting third airport suspect

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Belgian authorities have issued a new appeal for information about a man caught on CCTV at Brussels airport with two others who are thought to have blown themselves up in the check-in area last Tuesday. Belgian Federal Police released on Monday a 32-second video of a mysterious man in a hat seen in the company of the airport suicide bombers, indicating that he could still be at large. Earlier this week, Belgian media had claimed that a detained man named Faycal Cheffou was the mysterious suspect in the white jacket and dark hat. But Cheffou was freed on Monday following a lack of evidence linking him to the carnage, Belgian prosecutors said. Authorities also announced that the number of victims from last week's airport and subway suicide bombings rose to 35.

TERROR ATTACK IN PAKISTAN Scores detained

Taliban threaten 'slave media', mock PM; death toll hits 73

AGENCIES
Pakistan has detained more than 200 people since the Easter Sunday park bombing which killed 73 people including many children, officials said yesterday, as the militants behind the attack taunted the prime minister. The raids across the eastern province of Punjab were announced as parks reopened under tight security in the teeming provincial capital Lahore. But Gulshan-i-Iqbal, where explosives packed with ball bearings ripped through crowds near a children's play area, remained closed. Hundreds were injured in the suicide bombing claimed by the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction of the Pakistani Taliban, whose official name is the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "More than 5,000 people were searched and interrogated and most of them were allowed to go, but some 216 have been apprehended for further investigations," Punjab provincial law minister Rana Sanaullah told reporters yesterday. Sanaullah said police, paramilitary troops and intelligence agents had launched 56 intelligence operations in the last 24 hours in Punjab. More were being undertaken in all districts of the province "against sectarian militants and extremists", he said. Security for hundreds of churches was increased. Many of the victims were children and anguished families spent Easter Monday burying their dead. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his powerful military chief have both vowed to bring those behind the attack to justice. "Terrorists cannot dent our resolve. Our struggle will continue until the complete elimination of the menace of terrorism," the premier said Monday after visiting victims in the provincial capital, a stronghold of his ruling Pakistan Muslim League. But on Tuesday Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction, derided the prime minister on Twitter. "After the Lahore attack, Nawaz Sharif repeated old words to give himself false assurances," he wrote. "Nawaz Sharif should know that war has reached his doorstep, and God willing the mujahideen will be the winners in this war." It also warned Pakistani media they could be the next target. "Everyone will get their turn in this war, especially the slave Pakistani media," Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for the group, tweeted. "We are just waiting for the appropriate time." Christians make up an estimated 1.6 percent of Pakistan's 200 million people and have long faced discrimination.



Obama blames media for Trump's rise

BBC ONLINE
US President Barack Obama has said the media is partly to blame for the rise of Republican Donald Trump as a political force. Speaking at an event for political reporters, Obama said it was not enough to give "someone a microphone". Trump, a hotel tycoon who has made waves with a series of controversial remarks, is winning the race to be his party's presidential nominee. Giving a keynote address at a journalists' award dinner, Obama did not mention Trump by name but his target was clear. When he travels, the president said, people always ask him what is happening in American politics, because it is a place where you "can't afford completely crazy politics". Politicians, journalists and citizens are all responsible for the divisive and bitter political atmosphere, he said, but reporters should be digging deeper on the 2016 presidential candidates. Earlier, US Secretary of State John Kerry called the 2016 presidential race an "embarrassment" and warned that it is lowering the country's reputation internationally.

UNUSUAL PLANE HIJACKINGS SINCE 2001

Airplane hijackings such as the one that unfolded yesterday involving an Egyptian airliner have become relatively rare since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks led to increased security. In yesterday's drama, a man hijacked a plane allegedly demanding to see her ex-wife who lives in Cyprus. All passengers and crew were able to escape unharmed.

FEBRUARY 17, 2014: An Ethiopian Airlines flight to Rome with 202 people on board is diverted by its unarmed copilot to Geneva where he asks for asylum. Hailemedehin Abera Tagegn is arrested, but Switzerland refuses an Ethiopian request for his extradition.
FEBRUARY 7, 2014: A reportedly drunk Ukrainian hijacks a Pegasus Airlines flight with 110 people on board from Kharkov to Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport, brandishing what he claims is a detonator and shouting "Let's go to Sochi," Russia, where the Winter Olympics opening ceremony is under way. The plane is escorted by Turkish F-16 jets to Istanbul where anti-terrorist commandos launch an assault that ends without any casualties.
SEPTEMBER 10, 2009: A Bolivian preacher and former drug addict hijacks an Aeromexico airliner flying from Cancun to Mexico City with 104 people on board, saying he is on a divine mission. Presenting sand-filled juice cans with coloured lights as a bomb, Jose Marc Flores Pereira surrenders after the plane lands, with most passengers unaware they had been taken hostage.
OCTOBER 3, 2006: An unarmed Turkish army deserter, Hakan Ekinci, seizes a Turkish Airways flight carrying 113 people from Tirana to Istanbul. Ekinci had forced his way into the cockpit with a parcel that he said was a bomb, and told the pilot that he had a message for Pope Benedict XVI. He claimed to be a Christian convert and a conscientious objector, and sought help to avoid Turkey's compulsory military service.
SEPTEMBER 12, 2005: A man in a wheelchair and his son hijack an Aires turbo-prop plane with 25 people onboard as it flies from Florencia to Neiva, and force the plane to land in Bogota before surrendering to authorities. They had demanded compensation for a police search of their home 14 years earlier, in which the father was wounded and crippled.



SOURCE: AFP



Great Barrier Reef hit by 'worst' bleaching

BBC ONLINE

Evidence that Australia's Great Barrier Reef is experiencing its worst coral bleaching on record has renewed calls for the UN to list it as "in-danger". The National Coral Bleaching Taskforce says 95% of reefs from Cairns to Papua New Guinea are now severely bleached. It says only four reefs out of 520 have no evidence of bleaching. Unesco voted not to put the reef on its World Heritage in Danger list last year, but green groups want the decision reassessed. Coral taskforce convener Professor Terry Hughes told the BBC his team was yet to find the southern border where the bleaching ended. Experts say it is too early to tell whether the corals will recover, but scientists "in the water" are already reporting up to 50% mortality of bleached corals. Climate change and the effects of El Nino are being blamed for the rise in sea temperatures that causes coral bleaching. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) spokesperson Nick Heath said the unspoiled northern section of the reef had acted as a vital bank of genetic material to reseed areas further to the south. "We have been working to save the reef in [recent] years, and we always took for granted that we had the bank in the northern quarter that was safe, and seemed resilient in previous bleaching episodes, but now it's cooked to an inch of its life," Heath told the BBC. The Department of the Environment said state and federal governments were investing a projected A\$2bn (\$1.5bn; £1bn) over the next decade to protect the reef.

Myanmar lifts Rakhine emergency

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's outgoing government yesterday lifted a state of emergency in conflict-hit Rakhine, a parting gesture that coincides with turbulent relations between Aung San Suu Kyi's new administration and the western state's powerful Buddhist political party. Rakhine is deeply scarred by communal violence between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims that began in 2012, presenting one of the most acute challenges for Myanmar's first popularly elected government in decades. In a surprise move yesterday, outgoing president Thein Sein announced the removal of the emergency order, which had been in place since unrest left scores dead and tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims confined to miserable displacement camps. "According to the Rakhine State government, there is currently no threat of danger to people's lives," said a statement in state media announcing the order, which will see the military step back from providing day-to-day security in the region.



Syrian girls walk in the rain as they return from school in the southwestern city of Daraa, on Monday. Since an unprecedented "cessation of hostilities" came into force on February 27, 2016, the bombardment of the city of Daraa came to a halt enabling children in the city to return to school.

PHOTO: AFP

China appoints first special envoy to Syria

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday said it has appointed its first special envoy to Syria, as part of efforts to increase its diplomatic footprint in the Middle East. China depends on the volatile region for oil supplies but has long taken a back seat in its disputes, only recently beginning to expand its role. One analyst said the appointment was a calculated move. In recent months Beijing has hosted high-level delegations from both the Syrian government and the opposition. It consistently says the crisis needs a "political solution" but has four times vetoed UN Security Council measures aimed at addressing the conflict -- the latest seeking the investigation of war crimes in the country. Xie Xiaoyan, who has been China's ambassador to Iran, Ethiopia and the African Union, will be the new special envoy to Syria, foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a regular briefing.

Brazilian president's coalition collapses

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's ruling coalition collapsed yesterday when her main partner went into opposition, leaving the embattled president increasingly helpless in her fight against impeachment. The PMDB, the country's largest party, voted to end its alliance with Rousseff's leftist Workers' Party, or PT, with immediate effect. "From today, at this historic meeting of the PMDB, the PMDB withdraws from the government of President Rousseff," said Senator Romero Juca, the party vice president. The meeting, broadcast live on national television, was the culmination of a long divorce with Rousseff that leaves Brazil's first female president grasping at straws as she tries to stay in power. The vote and announcement took no more than three minutes and was accompanied by singing of the national anthem and shouts of "PT out!" Senator Aécio Neves, who heads the PSDB opposition party and who narrowly lost to Rousseff when she won re-election in 2014, commented: "Dilma's government is finished." "The exit of the PMDB is the last nail in the coffin," he said. Rousseff, who is fighting recession, street protests, a mammoth corruption scandal, and the push in Congress for her impeachment, had met PMDB ministers Monday to try to convince them to stay. But already on Monday, Tourism Minister Henrique Alves resigned, saying time had "run out" on the president. The mostly centrist PMDB has long been an awkward partner for the Workers' Party. But its votes in Congress, where it has 69 of the 513 lower house seats, would have been important to Rousseff in her bid to avoid impeachment, which requires two thirds of the votes in the lower house to pass. Rousseff also fears that the PMDB's exit will encourage other coalition partners to jump ship. Lawmakers from both the centre-right Progressive Party, which has 49 deputies, and the centre-left Social Democratic Party, which has 32, said their parties would meet this week on a possible split.