# NEWSIN brief

#### WHO: Ebola int'l health emergency is over

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization said Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer constitutes an international emergency, voicing confidence that remaining isolated cases in the affected countries can be contained. "The Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern," WHO chief told journalists, officially ending the emergency.

#### Seven dead in Canada small plane crash

AFP, Montreal

A small private jet crashed on Canada's Magdalen Islands off its Atlantic coast on Tuesday killing all seven people on board, most of them reportedly en route to a family funeral. The crash occurred as the turbo-prop aircraft carrying seven passengers and crew -reportedly including a former member of parliament – was approaching for landing in fog and gusts of wind.

#### Disasters cost \$92b in 2015: Swiss Re

AFP, Geneva

Natural and man-made disasters cost \$92 billion (81.24 billion euros) in 2015, compared with \$113 billion in 2014, the Swiss reinsurer Swiss Re said in report yesterday. Global insured losses were \$37 billion, far below the \$62 billion annual average of the last 10 years, it said. The biggest single insured-loss of the year was the twin explosions at the port of

#### 23 Morsi supporters get stiff jail terms

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court sentenced 23 supporters of Mohamed Morsi to lengthy prison terms yesterday over a violent protest against the Islamist president's ouster in 2013. Fifteen defendants were jailed for life, three for 15 years and five for 10. The defendants were found guilty of killing three civilians during the protest in Cairo on July 5, 2013.

#### Cyprus remands Egypt plane hijacker

AFP, Larnaca



hijacking Egyptian plane and

The man

accused of

diverting it to Cyprus has said he acted out of desperation to see his ex-wife and children, as he was remanded into custody yesterday. A judge in Larnaca on the island's southern coast ordered Egyptian Seif al-Din Mohamed Mostafa held for eight days during his first

court appearance after

Tuesday's hijacking.





during the handover ceremony at the presidential palace in Naypyitaw; NLD party leader Aung San Suu Kyi smiles with army

Migrant arrivals to Greece rise sharply after EU-Turkey deal

action on Syrian refugees

AGENCIES

UN chief Ban Ki-moon yesterday called for greater global efforts to tackle the Syrian refugee crisis, as he opened a conference on securing resettlement places for nearly half a million of those displaced by the fiveyear conflict.

"We are here to address the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time," Ban told the

conference in Geneva. "This demands an exponential increase in global solidarity." The UN secretary general, a South

Korean, recalled his own experience of fleeing his village with his family as a sixyear-old during the Korean War sixty years ago and said that for him stories of refugees stranded in camps with meagre resources "have personal meaning."

"Attempts to demonise people fleeing conflict are not only demeaning, offensive and counterproductive, they are factually wrong," Ban told journalists after his speech, in an apparent reference to rising anti-migrant rhetoric voiced by some political leaders across the developed world, reports AFP.

The Geneva meet follows a conference in

London in February where nations pledged \$11 billion (9.7 billion euros) to help manage one of the largest displacements of people since World War II.

Meanwhile, arrivals of refugees and migrants to Greece from Turkey rose sharply yesterday, just over a week since the European Union and Turkey struck a deal intended to cut off the flow.

Greek authorities recorded 766 new arrivals between Tuesday morning and yesterday morning, up from 192 the previous day. Most arrived on the northeastern

Aegean island of Lesbos, reports Reuters. Italy reported an even larger jump in arrivals on Tuesday, when officials there said 1,350 people - mostly from Africa

were rescued from small boats taking the longer migration route over the Mediterranean as

the weather warmed up. The EU Commission said on Tuesday that the flows in the last week had reduced, with only 1,000 people arriving from Turkey on Greek islands, compared to an average of 2,000 a day in the last

couple of months.

# France drops plans to change charter

Decides not to strip terror convicts of nationality

AFP, Paris

French President François Hollande yesterday scrapped contested constitutional reforms he proposed after the Paris attacks, in an embarrassing U-turn for his already beleaguered government.

The reforms included a plan to strip convicted terrorists of their French nationality which led to howls of protests from the left flank of Hollande's Socialist party and the resignation of his justice minister.

Hollande also wanted to enshrine in the constitution a state of emergency adopted after the November 13 attacks on the French capital, in which suicide bombers and gunmen from the Islamic State group killed 130 people.

But four months after both houses of parliament stood together to sing the "Marseillaise" national anthem, the lower house National Assembly and opposition-dominated Senate failed to agree on the text.

"A compromise appears out of reach on the stripping of terrorists' nationality," Hollande said.

"I also note that a section of the opposition is hostile to any constitutional revision. I deeply regret this attitude," the president said in a brief televised statement.

"I have decided to close the constitutional debate (but) I will not deviate from the commitments I have taken... to ensure the security of our country."

Hollande's move to drop the reform comes as authorities in Europe face increasing criticism over laxism and security failings in the face of the grow-

### TRANSITION

Myanmar entered a new era yesterday as the first civilian-led president took charge, officially ending decades of military control. Here is a timeline of a nation that went from colony to military dictatorship, but has begun making a remarkable and peaceful democratic transition:

1885: Centuries of rule by a Buddhist monarchy ends with the defeat and exile of Burma's last king by the British. Burma becomes a province of British

1941-1945: Japan occupies Burma during World War II. Nationalist hero Aung San fights with the Japanese, but swaps sides in the war's closing stages in the hope of achieving independence. His daughter Aung San Suu Kyi, who would go on to lead the pro-democracy movement, is born in 1945.

1948: Burma attains full independence from the British on January 4, a dream Aung San never lived to see following his assassination months earlier.

1962: After years of factional infighting, General Ne Win seizes power in a coup, turning the country from a multi-party federal union into an authoritarian oneparty state ordered to follow his "Burmese Path to Socialism".

PHOTO:

AFP

1988: Years of disastrous ecopolitical repression see Burma erupt in protest. The military responds brutally, killing an estimated 3,000 people. Suu Kyi emerges as a key opposition

1989: Junta changes the country's name to Myanmar.

1990: Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) wins a landslide victory in elections but the result is simply ignored by the military. Suu Kyi is placed under house arrest for much of the next 20 years. Many other opposition leaders are jailed or flee.

1991: Suu Kyi wins the Nobel Peace Prize while under house

2010: Suu Kyi is released.

2011: In a surprise move, the junta cedes power to a quasicivilian government. Many basic rights are restored, hundreds of political prisoners are freed.

2012: The NLD wins 43 out of 45 seats in April by-elections. Suu Kyi becomes an MP. Western powers lift most sanctions.

2015: Suu Kyi's NLD win a landslide November victory in the first free and fair elections in decades.

SOURCE: AFP

## 'Opposition' could join new Syria govt

Says Bashar al-Assad

BBC ONLINE

Syria's president has said "opposition forces" could form part of a new government, the shape of which could be agreed at peace talks in Geneva.

Bashar al-Assad told a Russian news agency he would expect it to consist of "independent forces, opposition forces and forces loyal to the state".

Indirect talks between the government and opposition resumed this month.

The opposition insist Assad must step down, though the government says his fate is not up for discussion. The president has previously said it is up to the people of Syria to decide who governs them.

A spokesman for the main opposition umbrella group at the UN-led talks dismissed Assad's latest comments.

The major powers backing rival sides in the war agree that there must be a political transition process, a new constitution and elections in Syria, but so far the talks in Geneva have not produced any signs of progress.

Assad did not spell out what he meant by "opposition forces". The Syrian government does not recognise rebel groups, which it commonly refers to as "terrorists", while there has long been a tolerated political opposition inside Syria. The next round of talks is expected to resume in the first half of April.



ing jihadist threat.

Palestinian boy Mahmoud al-Sindawi, 15, sells balloons and footballs at the Seaport of Gaza City on March 17, 2016. Sindawi, whose father is unemployed, earns around 25 Shekels (\$6.4) per working day and he and his brother are the main breadwinners of their family. Many children have been forced into work as a result of the last Gaza war as many lost one or both parents; or their parents became unemployed, injured, disabled or sick and were unable to work. Gaza is believed to have the highest unemployment rate in the world with nearly half of the adult population are without work.

## Marcos jewels used in graft fight

BBC ONLINE

A "virtual exhibit" of jewellery once owned by former first lady Imelda Marcos is being used as an anti-corruption campaign in the Philippines.

The jewels were seized by US Customs in 1986 when she and her husband, Ferdinand Marcos, fled to Hawaii after the military leader was overthrown. The Marcoses were allowed to return to the Philippines when Ferdinand

Marcos died in 1989. The government said the campaign would "remind the present generation of the excesses" of the Marcos era. The Marcoses, and Imelda in particular, were known for their love of luxury.

The family and associates are estimated to have amassed more than

assets during their time in power. But Imelda Marcos has long denied embezzlement.

She was found guilty on corruption charges in the mid-1990s and sentenced to a minimum of 12 years in prison, but the

conviction was overturned on appeal. The postings of the jewellery on Twitter and

\$10bn in property, jewellery, cash and other

The Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) has been posting pictures of the jewels online since 16 March, under the title: A Story of Excesses. Each dazzling item is accompanied by a

ning in a remarkable political comeback.

description of how the cost could instead have been used to improve life for people in the country. An "an-

Facebook come ahead of an election in May in

which three members of the family are run-

tique tiara with cabochon ruby, diamonds and mabe pearl", for example, could have paid for four years of university education for 2,000 students, it says. The government has announced it plans to

auction off the Marcos jewels, which are valued at more than \$21 m.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr , already once a senator, is running for vice-president; Imelda Marcos herself is hoping to be reelected to Congress; and her eldest daughter Imee Marcos is running for another term as governor of Ilocos Norte - her late father's political home turf.

### Islamists end protest in Pak capital

AFP, Islamabad

Islamist protesters gathered in the Pakistani capital ended their days-long sit-in yesterday after claiming the government had agreed to a number of their demands including the hanging of a Christian woman convicted of blasphemy.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Chauhdry Nisar Ali Khan denied however that a deal had been struck,

saying the demonstrators left "on their own accord". The protesters -- who numbered some 25,000 at Sunday in support of Mumtaz Qadri, who was

their peak -- had gathered hanged in late February five years after he assassinated a liberal Punjab governor over his calls to reform the country's blasphemy laws.

### Trump refuses to back any GOP nominee but himself he has been "treated very unfairly" in the

**BBC ONLINE** 

US Republican front-runner Donald Trump has dropped his pledge to support the party candidate if he does not win the nomination for the November election. Trump's rivals, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, refused to say outright whether they would

unite behind a nominee. All the Republican candidates signed a loyalty pledge last November. It is the latest sign of friction

between Trump and Cruz, who have been embroiled in a dispute involving each other's wives. A committee supporting Cruz published a nude photo of

Trump's wife Melania from 2000. In retaliation, Trump tweeted an unflattering picture of Cruz's wife Heidi. Asked by CNN about the dispute, Trump

said: "He started it."

CNN presenter Anderson Cooper said: But, sir, with all due respect, that's the

argument of a five-year-old."

"No, it's not," said Trump. Trump claims

campaign. To a question about whether he maintained his loyalty pledge from last November, Trump said: "No, I do not any more." Earlier, when asked the same question,

Cruz did not give a direct answer but said: "1 am not in the habit of supporting someone who attacks my wife and attacks my family." The billionaire has been repeat-

edly criticised by his rivals and observers for a campaign that has included personal attacks at rivals and criticism and violence against protesters. Earlier on Tuesday, Trump's cam-

paign manager Corey Lewandowski was charged with assaulting a journalist at a campaign event. Police said Lewandowski grabbed former Breitbart

to ask Trump a question, leaving a bruise. Despite the numerous recent controversies surrounding him, Trump is currently well ahead in the Republican race with 739 delegates to Cruz's 465.



### Missiles, not talks, key to Iran's security

Says Khamenei AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader said yesterday that missile power was key to the country's future security, slapping down moderates who say the focus should be on diplomacy.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say in all matters of state in Iran, praised the powerful Revolutionary Guards for their "show of advanced and precise missiles" in recent tests that drew Western criticism.

"In this jungle-like world, if the Islamic republic seeks negotiations, trade and even technology and science, but has no defence power, won't even small countries dare threaten Iran?" Khamenei said in remarks published on his official website.

"Our enemies are constantly enhancing their military and missile capabilities and given this how can we say the age of missiles has passed?"

He said those who believe only diplomacy is the key to Iran's future are acting out of "ignorance or treason". His comments appeared

aimed at ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who last week tweeted: "Tomorrow's world is the world of dialogue not missiles." They also came a day after

reporter Michelle Fields' arm when she tried the United States, France, Britain and Germany said Iran's recent ballistic missile tests violate UN Security Council resolutions.