

NEWS IN brief

Brussels Airport reopens after 12 days

Brussels Airport yesterday reopened with three "symbolic" flights and strict additional checks for passengers after 12 days. The key travel hub has been closed since two men blew themselves up in the departure hall on March 22 in coordinated blasts that also struck a metro station in the Belgian capital, killing a total of 32 people.

New MH370 debris found in Mauritius!

Australia's transport minister yesterday said new debris found on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius would be examined to see if it belonged to MH370, just weeks after two Mozambique fragments were linked to the missing flight. The debris was found on the Mauritius island of Rodrigues by a vacationing couple.

New arrest over India flyover tragedy

Indian police yesterday arrested a fourth employee of a construction firm building a flyover that collapsed killing 26 people, one of Kolkata's most senior officers said. Three workers were also arrested late Friday, a day after the flyover crashed down onto the busy street in the eastern city, crushing pedestrians and vehicles.

Kerry to visit Hiroshima nuclear memorial

US Secretary of State John Kerry and fellow envoys from the G7, including nuclear powers Britain and France, will visit Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park this month, Japan announced. Kerry will be the first US secretary of state to have ever visited the iconic park, where he is set to lay flowers at the memorial dedicated to the victims of the world's first nuclear attack on August 6, 1945.

Plane-car crash kills one on US highway

A plane has crash-landed on the Interstate 15 freeway in southern California, hitting a car and killing one of its passengers. Three others in the car were hurt along with the plane's pilot and passenger. The plane appeared to be having technical problems before it crash-landed on the freeway in San Diego County near Fallbrook, witnesses said. In 2000, a former owner guided the same Lancair IV down on to the same freeway after its engine failed. But this time it landed on its belly before skidding into a nearby car, fatally crushing Antoinette Isabelle, 38, of San Diego, in the back seat.



Pakistani residents gather beside flood waters rushing through a market area on the outskirts of Peshawar, yesterday. At least 24 people were killed and 17 injured after heavy rain across northwest Pakistan caused the roofs of dozens of homes to collapse, officials said yesterday.

Libya oil corp, central bank back unity govt

Libya's National Oil Corporation and Central Bank, backbones of its wealth, have thrown their support behind a UN-backed unity government in a blow to a rival administration refusing to cede power.

Prime minister-designate Fayez al-Sarraj and members of the GNA arrived Wednesday in Tripoli where a rival government, unrecognised by the international community, has ruled since mid-2014.

The Central Bank of Libya also "welcomed" the GNA and wished them "all the success in carrying out the difficult tasks ahead of them".

It urged Libyans to "now more than ever to unite and collaborate by working together to ensure that security and safety prevail in Libya, to stop fighting and bloodshed, to empower the judicial system and to embrace the rule of law".

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN ROW OVER DISPUTED REGION Clashes on despite truce calls

Dozens dead; Russia, US, UN call for ceasefire as tension flares

Azerbaijan yesterday said it would stop fighting Armenian-backed separatists over the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region after two days of clashes, but the other side denounced Baku's gesture as hollow and said violence was continuing. Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies inside Azerbaijan but is controlled by ethnic Armenians, has run its own affairs with heavy military and financial backing from Armenia since a separatist war ended in 1994.

But the situation along the tense "contact line" deteriorated in recent weeks, leading to clashes in which dozens were killed that drew international calls for an immediate ceasefire. Both sides also reported civilian casualties.

Baku pledged to "reinforce" several strategic positions it claimed to have "liberated" inside the Armenian-controlled region yesterday, which is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan.

The Armenian-backed separatist defence ministry in Karabakh -- which

claims independence but is heavily backed by Yerevan -- said they were willing to discuss a ceasefire but only if it saw them regain their territory.

A spokesman for the Karabakh presidency, David Babayan, told AFP that fighting had not halted along the frontline.

"Fierce fighting is under way on southeastern and northeastern sectors



of the Karabakh frontline," he said.

Fierce clashes left at least 18 Armenian and 12 Azerbaijani soldiers dead Saturday after the two sides accused each other of attacking with heavy weaponry across the volatile frontline.

Armenia's President Serzh Sarkisian called the clashes the "largest-scale hostilities" since a 1994 truce ended a war in which Armenian-backed

fighters seized the territory from Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan said one of its helicopters was shot down as its forces took control of several strategic heights and a village in Armenian-controlled territory.

Both Russia and the West appealed to all sides to show restraint, with key regional power broker President Vladimir Putin calling for an "immediate ceasefire".

US Secretary of State John Kerry urged the arch foes to return to peace talks under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), reiterating "there is no military solution to the conflict".

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meanwhile vowed to back traditional ally Azerbaijan "to the end" in the conflict.

Moscow-backed Armenia says it could crush any offensive.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region home to around 150,000 people on the southern Armenian-Azeri border, broke out in the dying years of Soviet Union. By the time the 1994 ceasefire was brokered, some 30,000 people had been killed in



He spoke 'behind my back'

Erdogan fumes after Obama slams Turkey's press freedom

REUTERS, Istanbul

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan accused US counterpart Barack Obama of going behind his back for criticising Turkey's press freedom record and linked it to efforts to "divide" Turkey, media reports said yesterday.

Obama said on Friday after meeting Erdogan on the sidelines of a nuclear summit in Washington that he was troubled by curbs on the press in Turkey and said he had urged Erdogan not to repress democratic debate in his country.

Turkey has drawn international condemnation for charging two journalists with treason for publishing footage that purportedly showed the intelligence agency shipping truckloads of weapons to opposition fighters in Syria in early 2014.

"I was saddened to hear that statement made behind my back. During my talk with Obama, those issues did not come up," Erdogan told reporters, according to Hurriyet daily. He returned to Turkey after a five-day trip to Washington yesterday.

Turkey has seized control of opposition newspapers and TV channels and cut the satellite feed of a pro-Kurdish channel, accusing them of terrorism-related activities. Erdogan has personally brought more than 1,800 criminal suits against individuals, including journalists and children, for insulting him.

India, Saudi to fight 'terrorism'

Agree to intel-sharing on money laundering, terror financing

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Saudi King Salman agreed in Riyadh yesterday to strengthen their cooperation in fighting "terrorism".

"The two leaders expressed strong condemnation of the phenomenon of terrorism in all its forms," said an Indian foreign ministry statement after their talks.

They "agreed to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism operations" and cyber-security, "including prevention of use of cyber space for terrorism, radicalisation and for disturbing social harmony," it added.

The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in intelligence-sharing on money laundry and terrorism financing, said a statement on the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

Just days ahead of Modi's two-day visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and the US Treasury announced joint sanctions on four individuals and two organisations with alleged links to al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) -- which India blames for the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed 166 people.

"We affirm the importance of continued cooperation



Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (R) and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi shake hands during a welcoming ceremony held in Riyadh, yesterday.

and coordination with your country's government in the field of fighting terrorism," King Salman told Modi, according to SPA.

Modi arrived in the world's largest crude exporter on Saturday and has held talks with top Saudi officials, his country's community in the Muslim kingdom, as well as Indian workers and local businessmen.

They also discussed regional and international developments, including the security situation in West Asia, the Middle East and South Asia, and agreed to bolster defence cooperation and diversify trade.

Their investment authorities meanwhile signed a framework agreement to facilitate investments by the private sectors in the two countries.

Saudi Arabia is home to 2.96 million Indian expatriates who send home over \$10 billion in remittances every year, according to India's foreign ministry.



Refugees and migrants including children who left the Chios registration camp, shout slogans and hold placards reading "No Turkey" during a protest yesterday as they camp out in the port of Chios. Greek and EU authorities on April 3, 2016 fine-tuned an operation to expel to Turkey hundreds of migrants denied asylum in a landmark deal slammed by rights groups.

Syria's Alawites distance themselves from Assad

In a deeply unusual move, leaders of President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite sect in Syria have released a document, obtained by the BBC, that distances themselves from his regime and outlines what kind of future they wish for the country after five years of civil war.

In the eight-page document, termed a "declaration of identity reform", the Alawites say they represent a third model "of and within Islam". Those behind the text say Alawites are not members of a branch of Shia Islam - as they have been described in the past by Shia clerics - and that they are committed to "the fight against sectarian strife".

They also make clear that they adhere to "the values of equality, liberty and citizen-



ship", and call for secularism to be the future of Syria, and a system of governance in which Islam, Christianity and all other religions are equal. And despite Alawites having dominated Syria's government and security services under Assad and his late father Hafez for more than four decades, they stress that the legitimacy of his regime "can only be considered according to the criteria of democracy and fundamental rights". Alawites are said to share the belief of members of the main branches of Shia Islam that Ali was the rightful successor to Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community. The Alawites purportedly differ from Twelvers in holding that Ali was a manifestation of God - a notion that some members of Syria's Sunni majority consider heretical.

J&K to get its first female CM today

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti will be sworn in as the first woman chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir today heading a coalition government with BJP in the only Muslim-majority state.

The 56-year-old leader, daughter of PDP founder Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, will take oath of office at Raj Bhawan in Jammu today at 11am.

Mehbooba assuming office will be a landmark event in the history of Jammu and Kashmir as well as rest of the country. She will be the first woman to head a government in Jammu and Kashmir and the first Muslim woman to become the chief minister of a state in India.

Governor N N Vohra on Saturday invited the PDP president to form and lead the PDP-BJP coalition government in the state. The PDP-BJP government can expect a smooth run if the two ideologically opposite parties can avoid controversies that dogged their first brush together with power when Mufti Mohammad Sayeed headed the government for 10 months till his death on January 7.



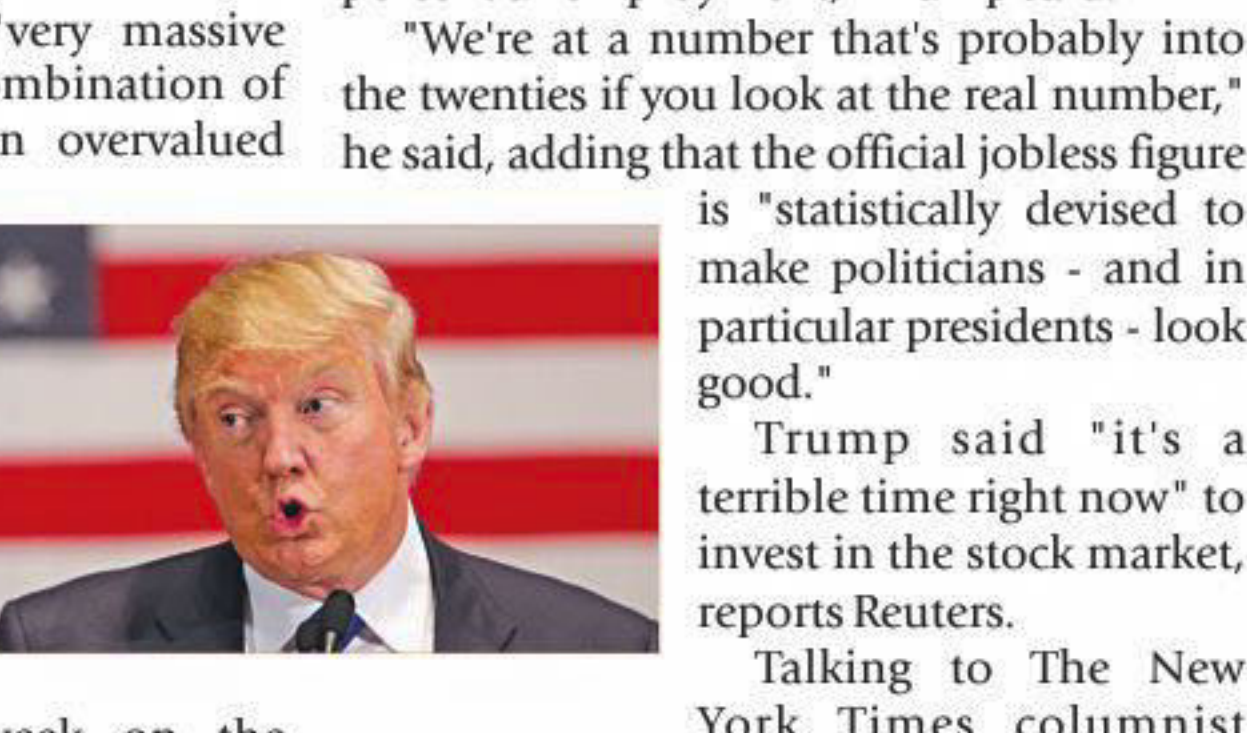
'We're sitting on a bubble'

Trump predicts 'very massive recession' in US

Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump predicted that the United States is on course for a "very massive recession," warning that a combination of high unemployment and an overvalued

"I think we're sitting on an economic bubble. A financial bubble," the billionaire businessman said in an interview with The Washington Post published on Saturday.

Coming off a tough week on the campaign trail in which he made a series of missteps, Trump's latest comments bring him back into the limelight ahead of Tuesday's important primary in Wisconsin where he trails in the polls. The former reality TV star said that the



real US jobless figure is much higher than five percent number released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. "We're not at 5 percent unemployment," Trump said. "We're at a number that's probably into the twenties if you look at the real number," he said, adding that the official jobless figure is "statistically devised to make politicians - and in particular presidents - look good." Trump said "it's a terrible time right now" to invest in the stock market, reports Reuters. Talking to The New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd, in a column published Saturday, Trump says he regrets retweeting an unflattering picture of the wife of arch-rival Ted Cruz, in a rare act of contrition from the Republican presidential frontrunner.