

NEWSIN brief

Islamic State fighters in Makkah!
REUTERS, Dubai

Saudi security forces shot dead two alleged Islamic State fighters and two others blew themselves up outside the holy city of Makkah yesterday, the interior ministry said. "The terrorists fired upon security forces requiring them to respond in kind to neutralize the threat, leading to the killing of two and the death of two others who blew themselves up with explosive belts," the ministry said in a statement.

Clinton's testimony may be need in email row
REUTERS, Washington

A federal judge in Washington on Wednesday ordered that Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton may have to testify in a lawsuit related to the private email server she used while secretary of state. US District Judge Emmet Sullivan said the parties in the case also struck an agreement about the scope of the testimonies that some of Clinton's former top aides will give in the case.

Top Aussie IS recruiter killed in US air strike
AFP, Sydney

Australia's most wanted Islamic State terror suspect, linked to several attacks on home soil, has been killed in a US air strike in Iraq, Canberra said yesterday, warning others will be targeted. The death of Neil Prakash is considered significant by Australian and US authorities because of his highly prominent and influential role as a senior recruiter for the jihadist group.

Woman rescued after six days under rubble
AFP, Nairobi

A woman was pulled alive yesterday from the rubble of an apartment block that collapsed six days ago when heavy rains hit Nairobi, causing floods and landslides in the Kenyan capital. There were cheers and shouted prayers from a crowd that had gathered at the site of the ruined six-storey building when the woman, covered with a blanket and lying on a stretcher, was carried to a waiting ambulance.

Bomb kills five in Iraq graveyard
AFP, Hilla

A bomb went off in a graveyard south of Baghdad yesterday, killing five people among a group of mourners at a burial, Iraq's interior ministry spokesman said. The attack took place in Haswa, about 40 kilometres south of the capital, the same area where a suicide bombing ripped through a football trophy ceremony in March.



A boy rides a bicycle near damaged buildings in the rebel held area of Old Aleppo, Syria, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Air strikes hit refugee camp

28 killed, dozens wounded; truce takes hold in Aleppo

AGENCIES

At least 28 people, including women and children, were killed when air strikes hit a camp for internally displaced people in Syria's Idlib province near the Turkish border yesterday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The death toll at the camp near the town of Sarmada was expected to rise because of the number of seriously wounded people, the Observatory said. "There were two aerial strikes that hit this makeshift camp for refugees who have taken refuge from fighting in southern Aleppo and Palmyra. The camp took two direct hits. I heard many tents were on fire," said Abu Ibrahim al-Sarmadi, an activist from the nearby town of Atmeh who has been speaking to people near the affected camp. He said wounded people were rushed to the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for treatment in Turkey.

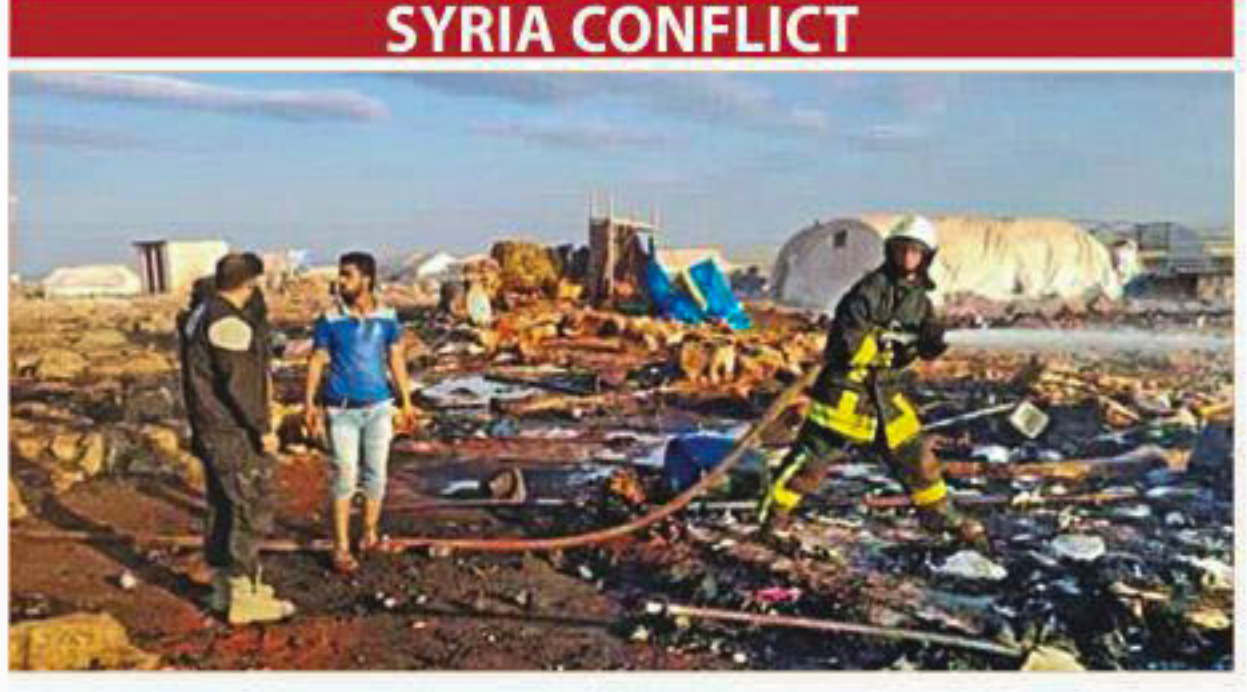
The White House condemned the air strike as inexcusable. Meanwhile a cessation of hostilities agreement brokered by Russia and the United States brought a measure of relief to the battered Syrian city of Aleppo yesterday but President

Bashar al-Assad said he still sought a total, crushing victory over rebel forces.

Syrian state media said the army would abide by a "regime of calm" in the city that came into effect at 1:00am for 48 hours, and relative calm prevailed yesterday morning after two weeks of death and destruction.

Elsewhere in Syria, fighting persisted. Islamic State militants captured the Shaer gas field in eastern Syria yesterday, according to rebel sources and a monitor. Assad said he would accept nothing less than an outright victory against rebels in Aleppo and across Syria, state media reported. People in several districts in Aleppo ventured out onto the streets where more shops than normal had opened, the resident of al Shaar neighborhood said. Another resident said civilians in several districts sensed a general trend toward calm.

A rebel source also said that despite intermittent firing across the city's main front lines, fighting had subsided and no army shelling of residential areas had been heard. Syria's conflict has killed more than 270,000 people and displaced millions since it started after the brutal crackdown of anti-government protests in 2011.



SYRIA CONFLICT

FIRST ISRAEL-HAMAS CLASHES SINCE 2014

Tank shelling kills Gaza woman

AFP, Gaza City

A Palestinian woman was killed when Israeli tank shells hit her home in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, the second day of exchanges of fire with Hamas fighters.

They were the first direct clashes between Israeli soldiers and Hamas militants since the devastating Gaza war in 2014, and come as a new tunnel reaching into the Jewish state was discovered.

Since the confrontations broke out, Hamas and other militant groups have fired bullets and mortar rounds on at least 10 occasions, and the Israeli air force has carried out at least three bombing raids. Israeli tanks stationed on the border have also fired multiple times at what the army said were Hamas targets.

Late yesterday, tank shelling that followed a mortar attack from the Khan Yunis area in southern Gaza killed Zeina Al-Amour, 54, according to the Nasser hospital that pronounced her death.

The shelling came after a night in which air raids wounded four people, three of them children, medical and security officials said.

The flare-up has raised concerns over the fate of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza, that has held since the 50-day war left more than 2,251 Palestinians and 73 Israelis dead.

Although renewed violence has raised fears of a fresh conflict, sources on both sides downplayed the danger.



RIFT WITH ERDOGAN Turkish PM declares his resignation

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu yesterday announced he was stepping down as ruling party chief and premier, in a shock resignation set to further boost President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's growing powers.

Divisions between Davutoglu and Erdogan that had been rumoured for months erupted into the open on Wednesday, with the two leaders holding crisis talks at the presidential palace that failed to resolve the conflict. Davutoglu said after a central executive committee of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) that the party would hold an extraordinary congress on May 22 and he would not be standing for a new mandate.

This means that the premier -- who has headed the government since 2014 when Erdogan moved from the premiership to the presidency -- will step aside from his twin jobs of AKP boss and prime minister. "I don't think I will be a candidate in the next congress in the current circumstances," Davutoglu said. He added that after "consultations with friends", including Erdogan. "I have decided that it will be better to change party leader, for the continuation of the AK Party's unity."

In an emotional farewell statement in which he took no questions, Davutoglu gave a long description of the achievements since he became premier. "There is no feeling of failure or regret in making this decision" to step aside, he said.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

IDF chief compares Israel to Nazi Germany

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A senior military general has backtracked after appearing to draw parallels between "horrifying events" in Europe in the 1930s and modern Israeli society.

Major General Yair Golan, the Israel Defence Forces' (IDF) Deputy Chief of Staff, was speaking at a Holocaust memorial service when he made the unexpected statement. However, following strong criticism of his comments, he has since denied he was attempting to make a direct comparison between Israel, its armed forces and Nazi Germany.

"It's scary to see horrifying developments that took place in Europe begin to unfold here," Maj Gen Golan told an audience of politicians and dignitaries.

"Because if there is one thing that is scary in remembering the Holocaust, it is noticing horrific processes which developed in Europe -- particularly in Germany -- 70, 80, and 90 years ago, and finding remnants of that here among us in the year 2016."

"The Holocaust, in my view, must lead us to deep soul-searching about the nature of man. It must bring us to conduct some soul-searching as to the responsibility of leadership and the quality of our society. It must lead us to fundamentally rethink how we, here and now, behave towards the other."

"On Holocaust Remembrance Day, it is worthwhile to ponder our capacity to uproot the first signs of intolerance, violence, and self-destruction that arise on the path to moral degradation," Maj Gen Golan said.



Voters arrive at a Polling Station in a church in south London yesterday to cast their ballot papers. Londoners voted yesterday to elect their new mayor following a bitter campaign between the two leading candidates Labour's Sadiq Khan, and the Conservatives' Zac Goldsmith, that stayed ugly to the very end. While London chooses a new mayor, there are also elections to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish assemblies, and 124 local authorities scattered across England.

PHOTO: AFP

'Fake' mountain to increase rainfall!

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The United Arab Emirates is planning to build a man-made mountain to increase rainfall. The desert nation is hoping the major project will recreate the effect of mountain ranges and force air to rise, creating clouds that will allow cloud-seeding.

Cloud-seeding is a type of weather modification which aims to alter the amount and type of precipitation produced by clouds. Scientists from National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) run by the US-based University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) are currently in the "detailed modelling study" phase.

They are deciding on the most effective locations in the Emirate states to build it, while also pondering how wide and tall it should be.

Roelof Bruinjes, an expert in weather modification programs from NCAR, told Arabian Business: "Building a mountain is not a simple thing. We are still busy finalising assimilation, so we are doing a spread of all kinds of heights, widths and locations [as we simultaneously] look at the local climatology."

"If [the project] is too expensive for [the government], logically the project won't go through, but this gives them an idea of what kind of alternatives there are for the long-term future."

"If it goes through, the second phase would be to go to an engineering company and decide whether it is possible or not."

If successful, these man-made clouds will allow planes to deposit chemicals such as silver iodine, which will increase rainfall. The UAE already has a permanent weather modification department which spent \$385,400 on cloud-seeding last year alone.

'War in GOP' after Trump's win

AGENCIES

His swift march from fringe curiosity to presidential nominee all but over, Donald Trump was confronting dangerous new challenges as the Republican Party he aspires to lead teetered on civil war and questions emerged about how he will fund his campaign going forward.

Republican lawmakers, operatives and donors grappled with whether to support Donald Trump, who effectively clinched his party's presidential nomination this week after his two remaining rivals, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, dropped out of the White House race.

As Trump sought to rally the fractured party behind him, many prominent Republicans got behind the reality TV star and real estate developer, while some weighed their options. Still others said they might vote in the Nov. 8 general election for Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee.

Late Wednesday the top Republican in the Senate, Mitch McConnell, publicly endorsed Trump's candidacy

"to prevent what would be a third term of Barack Obama."

While the hierarchy of the party called for a rallying of support behind Trump, rebellion simmered both in the rank and file of the party and also among some of its more prominent figures. "If we nominate Trump, we will get destroyed.....and



we will deserve it," Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who was among the original 17 Republican runners.

Republican former presidents George HW Bush and George W Bush do not plan to endorse anyone in the White House race this year, their spokesmen told Reuters.

It is the scenario that many had feared, a Trump candidacy threatening to tear the Republican Party, also known as the GOP, apart. It is unclear what influence party leaders can have.

Trump meanwhile acknowledged that he may be obliged to start taking more money from outside donors. He has spent about \$44 million of his own fortune getting to this point, but a general election campaign could cost upwards of \$1 billion. That risks damaging his carefully cultivated image of being a self-funded candidate, however.

The Clinton and Trump fight sets of something unprecedented in US history: both are widely unpopular.

Two thirds (65 percent) of voters have unfavorable opinions of the Republican billionaire, and only a quarter (24 percent) think positively of him, according to a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC survey. In Clinton's case, 56 percent are down on her, while only 32 percent see her in a favorable light, the same poll found.

Brazil SC suspends president's foe

BBC ONLINE

Brazil's top court yesterday suspended Lower House Speaker Eduardo Cunha from his mandate, following a request by the country's attorney general.

He has been accused of trying to obstruct a corruption investigation against him and intimidating lawmakers.

Cunha is an outspoken critic of President Dilma Rousseff and has led an impeachment drive against her.

In a BBC interview, Rousseff was voted to "keep fighting".

Next week, Brazil's Senate is due to vote on whether to launch an impeachment trial against her.

If a simple majority votes in favour, she will be suspended from office for 180 days while Vice-President Michel Temer takes over as interim president.

Under Brazil's constitution, Mr Cunha was the next in line for the presidency after Temer, who is facing impeachment proceedings on charges similar to those facing President Rousseff.

Rousseff has accused Temer and Cunha, who belong to the opposition PMDB party, of being the ringleaders of a "coup attempt" against her.



Dilma Rousseff Eduardo Cunha