

# NEWS IN brief

## Suicide blast kills 8 Yemeni troops

REUTERS, Aden  
A suicide bomber killed at least eight people and wounded 17, including a senior commander, when he rammed a car laden with explosives into a government military convoy travelling in eastern Yemen yesterday, a security official said. The official said that six soldiers and two civilians died in the attack near the city of al-Qatan.

## 'World's oldest' axe found in Australia

AFP, Sydney  
A rock flake found in Australia is believed to be from the world's oldest known axe and likely dates from just after humans arrived in the country around 50,000 years ago, scientists said yesterday. The fragment, about the size of a thumbnail, was found in Western Australia's sparsely populated Kimberley region. The fragment has been dated at between 46,000 and 49,000 years old. Humans are thought to have arrived in Australia around 50,000 years ago.



## No 'imminent' signs of N Korea nuke test

AFP, Seoul  
Recent satellite images show no imminent signs of a fifth North Korean nuclear test, following the conclusion of a party congress that many thought Pyongyang would mark with an atomic detonation. The pictures, dated May 8, show low-level activity at the underground test site at Punggye-ri in northeast are were "no longer present", according to an analysis by US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University yesterday.

## Wars displace record 40.8m people: study

AFP, London  
The number of people internally displaced by conflicts around the world rose last year to a record 40.8 million people, a report showed yesterday. "This is the highest figure ever recorded and twice the number of refugees worldwide," said Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), co-authors of the report with the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Some 8.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs) linked to conflict were recorded in 2015, including 4.8 million in the Middle East and North Africa. "Displacement... has snowballed since the Arab spring uprising in 2010 and the rise of the Islamic State," said the report, with Yemen, Syria and Iraq accounting for more than half of the total. Outside the Middle East, the countries with the highest numbers of people fleeing were Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Ukraine. The report also said 19.2 million people were internally displaced last year by disasters. India, China and Nepal accounted for the highest numbers with 3.7 million, 3.6 million and 2.6 million. Conflicts and natural disasters made for a total of 27.8 million new IDPs last year. Out of the top ten countries for IDPs, the report found that five -- Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, South Sudan and Sudan -- have featured on the same ranking every year since 2003.



People gather at the scene of a car bomb attack in Baghdad's mainly Shia district of Sadr City, yesterday. Inset, A woman reacts at the scene of the blast. Three car bombs in Baghdad, including the blast at the market, killed at least 94 people yesterday, the bloodiest day in the Iraqi capital this year. Islamic State claimed responsibility. PHOTO: REUTERS

## DROUGHT IN INDIA SC orders disaster fund for victims

AFP, New Delhi  
India's top court yesterday criticised the government for failing to set up a disaster fund to help drought-hit farmers and villagers suffering crop losses and severe water shortages. India is in the grip of its worst water crisis in years, with the government saying about 330 million people, or a quarter of the population, are suffering from drought after two weak monsoons. Acting on a petition, the Supreme Court issued a slew of orders to the government including creating a national plan to tackle the crisis, a mitigation fund and standard procedures for declaring areas drought-hit. Justice Madan B Lokur also lashed out at the government over a lack of preparedness for the drought which has struck at least 10 states across the country. "Evidently, anticipating a disaster such as a drought is not yet in the 'things to do' list of the Union of India and ad hoc measures and knee-jerk reactions are the order of the day," Lokur said in a written judgement. "We are also quite surprised that the National Disaster Mitigation Fund has not yet been set up even after 10 years of the enforcement of the DM (Disaster Management) Act," he also said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has met recently with at least three state chief ministers over the drought, as the government comes under intense pressure to ease the crisis. Rural Development Minister Birender Singh told parliament on Tuesday that millions in government funds have been released to drought-hit regions, as temperatures soar across the country in the summer months. Industry body ASSOCHAM estimated yesterday the crisis would cost the economy \$100 billion if it continued until the end of the year. Poor rains have prompted extreme measures including water restrictions, armed guards at reservoirs and water trains sent to the worst-affected regions.

## IS cuts regime supply route to Palmyra

AFP, Beirut  
Syrian regime forces yesterday battled jihadists who cut a key supply route west of ancient Palmyra, after new bombardments hit Aleppo city where a ceasefire is due to expire at midnight. The latest fighting comes as world powers prepare to meet in Vienna next week to try to revive peace talks aimed at ending a five-year conflict that has killed more than 270,000. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, said the Islamic State (IS) group yesterday cut the main road from Homs city to Palmyra just weeks after the army recaptured the city, a UNESCO world heritage site. A military source told the SANA official news agency that the Syrian air force had carried out strikes against IS around the main facility in the Shaer gas field northwest of Palmyra. The jihadist group last week seized the Shaer gas field from the regime. President Bashar al-Assad's troops retook Palmyra with support from Russian air strikes on March 27 -- an achievement his regime celebrated with concerts in its ancient amphitheatre last week. But today IS surrounds Palmyra from all directions except the southwest, the head of the Observatory said, adding that IS was within 10 kilometres of the city. In the northern battleground city of Aleppo, an AFP correspondent said the city's rebel-held east was calm yesterday after fighting overnight. A local truce -- brokered by Russia and the United States after a spike in violence in the city last month -- is set to expire at midnight. A local truce took effect in Aleppo last Thursday after a surge in fighting killed more than 300 people in the city. Meanwhile, The US-led coalition on Tuesday said it has staged 14 strikes against Islamic State in its latest round of daily strikes on the militant group in Iraq and Syria, the coalition leading the operations said in a statement.

### SYRIA CRISIS

## US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2016 Trump's support surges nationally Sanders wins West Virginia primary

REUTERS, New York  
Donald Trump's support has surged and he is now running nearly even with Democrat Hillary Clinton among likely US voters, a dramatic turnaround since he became the Republican party's presumptive presidential nominee, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released yesterday. The results could signal a close fight between the two likely White House rivals as Americans make up their minds ahead of the Nov 8 election to succeed Democratic President Barack Obama. As recently as last week, Clinton led Trump by around 13 points in the poll. In the most recent survey, 41 percent of likely voters supported Clinton, the Democratic front-runner, and 40 percent backed Trump, with 19 percent not decided on either yet, according to the online poll of 1,289 people conducted from Friday to Tuesday. The poll had a credibility interval of about 3 percentage points. The results reflect a big increase in support for Trump since he knocked out US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and Ohio Governor John Kasich last week to become the last Republican in the White House race. Presidential elections are not decided by the national popular vote but by the Electoral College, which is based on state-by-state results. Opinions are likely to change over the next six months as American voters become inundated with hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign advertising, highly publicized debates and a pair of party conventions. The poll report came after Clinton lost the primary to Bernie Sanders in economically struggling West Virginia on Tuesday, possibly signaling trouble for her in industrial states in the November general election. The defeat slowed Clinton's march to the nomination, but she is still heavily favored to become the Democratic candidate in the Nov 8 election to face the presumptive Republican nominee. Donald Trump won contests in West Virginia and Nebraska handily on Tuesday. Sanders, who has vowed to take his campaign all the way to the Democrats' July 25-28 convention in Philadelphia, has repeatedly said he is the stronger candidate to beat Trump in November, and following his West Virginia win, he emphasized economic themes. Trump is set to meet with party leaders in the US Congress today, including US House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan. After Ryan said last week that he was not ready to endorse Trump, the presumptive nominee said he would have to decide whether he still wanted Ryan to preside over the party's July convention.



THE US PRIMARIES: WHERE THEY STAND

Party	Total Delegates	Needed to Ensure Nomination
DEMOCRATS	2,383	4,763
REPUBLICANS	1,237	2,472

Legend: STILL TO BE VOTED (light blue), TOTAL WITH 'SUPER DELEGATES' (medium blue), ELECTED DELEGATES (dark blue)

Democrat candidates: HILLARY CLINTON (2,239), BERNIE SANDERS (1,469)

Republican candidates: DONALD TRUMP (1,135)

SOURCE: REALCLEARPOLITICS AFP



An Indian Hindu priest performs a Hawan (The Sacred Fire) ritual alongside posters bearing the image of US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in New Delhi, yesterday. Right-wing Indian Hindu activists are holding a religious puja to help ensure victory for US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in the forthcoming presidential elections, urging Indian-origin US citizens to vote for him. PHOTO: AFP



## Defiant Rousseff faces impeachment in senate

AFP, Brasilia  
Brazil's Senate opened debate yesterday ahead of a vote on suspending President Dilma Rousseff and launching an impeachment trial that could bring down the curtain on 13 years of leftist rule in Latin America's biggest country. Even allies of Rousseff, 68, said she had no chance of surviving the vote. She is accused of illegal accounting manoeuvres but says the charges are trumped up and amount to a coup d'etat by her centre-right opponents. Debate was expected to last all day with a vote during the night or early hours today. A simple majority in the 81 member Senate would be enough to trigger Rousseff's six-month suspension pending judgment, in which a two-thirds majority would force her from office permanently. Senate President Renan Calheiros, who was overseeing the proceedings, told journalists that impeachment would be "traumatic" for Brazil, which is already struggling with the worst recession in decades and a corruption scandal that has ripped apart the political and business elite. "The process of impeachment... is long, traumatic and does not produce quick results," Calheiros warned. Rousseff's government lawyer lodged a last-ditch appeal with the Supreme Court on Tuesday to block the vote, but the court had not even responded before senators sat down in their futuristic building in the capital Brasilia. "There won't be any miracle. She'll be suspended for six months and then we'll open the debate of the merits" of the case, Paulo Paim, a senator of Rousseff's Workers' Party (PT), told reporters. He said the impeachment drive was "a symbol of Brazilian politicians' incompetence, to accept a tainted process against a president they know is honest." Rousseff is accused of breaking budgetary laws by taking loans to boost public spending and mask the sinking state of the economy during her 2014 re-election campaign.



## NZ speaker expels PM during debate

AGENCIES  
Being New Zealand's prime minister granted John Key no special favours during a heated parliamentary debate about the Panama Papers. Reprimanded for failing to ignore a call to order, he was thrown out of the chamber by house speaker David Carter yesterday, reports BBC. Carter said Key had ignored several of his warnings: "He is to be treated no differently to any other in this house," Carter said. It is not the first time John Key has been thrown out of the chamber as PM. Labour leader Andrew Little said Key's first ejection from Parliament as Prime Minister was "shameful" and showed he had "lost control." Green co-leader James Shaw had demanded Key apologise for his claim that Greenpeace and Amnesty were implicated in the Panama Papers, when the charities had been used without their knowledge in sham trusts. Little said Key had lost control. Parliamentary records show Key has been expelled on three other occasions while MP, the New Zealand news website Stuff reports. Nor is he the first New Zealand prime minister to be ejected from the chamber: he follows in the footsteps of Helen Clark, in 2005, and before her, David Lange in both 1986 and 1987.



## Return stolen assets

AFP, London  
Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday urged Britain to return assets stolen by corrupt officials in pointed remarks after Prime Minister David Cameron called his country "fantastically corrupt". "I am not going to demand any apology from anybody. What I am demanding is the return of the assets," Buhari told an anti-corruption event hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. He noted the case of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, a former governor of oil-rich Bayelsa state who was detained in London on charges of money laundering in 2005, but skipped bail by disguising himself as a woman. Alamieyeseigha, who died in Nigeria in October, left behind "his bank account and fixed assets, which Britain is prepared to hand over to us. This is what I'm asking for", Buhari said. "What would I do with an apology?" he said. Cameron is hosting a major anti-corruption summit today, which Buhari is attending alongside Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Ahead of the talks, Cameron was caught on camera telling Queen Elizabeth II that the leaders of some "fantastically corrupt" countries were attending, adding that Nigeria and Afghanistan were "possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world". A spokesman for Buhari said the comments were "embarrassing" and reflected "an old snapshot of Nigeria". Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth II was caught on camera describing some Chinese officials as "very rude" in a rare diplomatic gaffe by the long-serving British monarch over a state visit that drummed up billions in Chinese investment. The British monarch never expresses overtly political views in public and is known for her reserve and discretion, never granting an interview in her 64-year reign.



## RIVER INTER-LINKING IN INDIA Large scale projects not feasible: BJP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi  
The ambitious river inter-linking project is not feasible on a large scale, senior leader of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party Murli Manohar Joshi, who chaired a parliamentary panel that examined the issue of Ganga rejuvenation, said yesterday. Joshi said rivers can be inter-linked on a small scale but it is not "practical" to go for large-scale interlinking at the national level. Talking to reporters after tabling a report of the Estimates Committee on Ganga Rejuvenation, the BJP veteran claimed thousands of kilowatts of power will be required to run pump sets to lift water from one end to another. "It will require power and money. We are short of power as it is...how will water cross the Malwa Plateau. Imagine the number of pumping sets required," he contended. He said had it been practical, then nature itself would have done it. "The rivers would have been inter-connected. But it is not." Indian government has so far identified three projects for interlinking of rivers. The river interlinking project is considered the brainchild of BJP-led NDA government and in October, 2002, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had formed a task force to get the project going against the backdrop of the acute drought that year.