

NEWSIN brief

Last May hottest on record: Nasa

AFP, Washington
May's temperatures broke global records yet again, as the northern hemisphere finishes its hottest spring on record, statistics released Tuesday by Nasa showed. The Arctic in particular experienced abnormal heat, causing Arctic sea ice and the Greenland ice sheet to start melting unusually early, said Nasa.

Tokyo governor resigns over spending scandal

AFP, Tokyo
The governor of Tokyo resigned over spending public money on lavish hotels and spa trips. Unpopular Yoichi Masuzoe fell on his sword just hours before facing a no-confidence vote, making him the city's second governor to quit since Tokyo was named host of the 2020 Olympics.

'N Korea may have 21 nukes or more'

AFP, Seoul
North Korea may have produced an additional six or more nuclear weapons over the past 18 months, possibly bringing its total arsenal to more than 21 bombs, a US think-tank has said. The report came after International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Chief Yukiya Amano said last week that North Korea might have reactivated a plant at Yongbyon for reprocessing plutonium for use in nuclear weapons.

4 Indonesians jailed over 'IS terror plot'

AFP, Jakarta
An Indonesian bombmaker inspired by an Islamic State extremist was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison for plotting to blow up a Buddhist temple on Java island. Three others -- Sugiyanto, Saifudin and Yus Karman -- were also found guilty of terrorist offences in a Jakarta court and sentenced to four years and eight months over their role in the foiled plot.



A man presents a bouquet to a police officer yesterday, outside the house in Magnanville where a man claiming allegiance to the Islamic State group killed a French policeman and his partner on the night of June 13. A fresh wave of Islamic State jihadists has left Syria and could commit attacks imminently in France and Belgium, Belgian police have been warned, according to media reports yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

US court upholds 'net neutrality'

AFP, Washington
A US federal court ruled Tuesday that the Internet is effectively a public utility, upholding a hotly contested regulation requiring broadband firms to treat all online traffic equally. The so-called "net neutrality" principle was upheld in a 2-1 decision by the US Appeals Court panel in Washington, a major ruling in a decade-long legal battle and the first court approval after two past efforts failed. The ruling deals a setback to major broadband firms like Verizon and AT&T, which claimed the rules unfairly restrict providers and discourage investment. Backers of the rule say it is needed to ensure that Internet service providers avoid deals that could favor one service with faster access while throttling or blocking a rival. Companies such as Netflix, Yelp and Twitter, for example, were backing the FCC rules. "Now consumers will be assured the right to full access to the Internet without interference from gatekeepers," said Gene Kimmelman of the consumer group Public Knowledge. Ed Black of the Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents various Internet and tech firms, also welcomed the ruling. "This is a huge, historic victory for all Internet users," Black said. "It means no company can act as a gatekeeper for Internet content." President Barack Obama, who has been a backer of net neutrality, welcomed the ruling. "Today's ruling is a victory for the open, fair, and free Internet as we know it today -- one that remains open to innovation and economic growth, without service providers serving as paid gatekeepers," a White House statement said.

Kerry warns Russia over 'frayed' Syria ceasefire

Aleppo clashes kill 70; fight against IS rages on in Sirte, Fallujah

AFP, Beirut
US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday warned Russia and the Syrian government to respect a "frayed" ceasefire, as vicious fighting south of second city Aleppo left dozens dead. The vital northern province of Aleppo has been ravaged on multiple fighting fronts in a devastating war that has killed more than 280,000 people.

fresh bout of fighting between the regime, rebels, and jihadists south of Aleppo city, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Since fighting erupted on Tuesday, at least 70 fighters in total have been killed and the villages of Zaytan and Khalasa have changed hands twice. Meanwhile, forces allied with Libya's unity government said yesterday they had repelled a counter-attack by the Islamic State group in the jihadists' coastal stronghold of Sirte. IS jihadists hit positions controlled by fighters loyal to Libya's UN-backed Government of National Accord west of the city with tank, mortar and sniper fire on Tuesday.



Washington and Moscow have tried to reinforce the broader truce with temporary, local freezes on fighting, but to no avail. "It is very clear that the cessation of hostilities is frayed and at risk and that it is critical for a genuine cessation to be put in place. We know that, we have no illusion," said Kerry. Efforts were underway, he said, to reach a new agreement "in the next week or two" to reinstate the ceasefire across Syria, leading to more humanitarian aid deliveries and a resumption of the peace process. In Aleppo province, dozens of fighters were killed in a

The Islamic State group battled Iraqi forces and held civilians hostage yesterday to defend its bastion of Fallujah. Thousands of men trying to flee Fallujah were being held for screening by pro-government forces and allegations of abuses were mounting. "Let's be absolutely clear: there is no safe passage out of Fallujah to speak of," NRC country director Nasr Muflahi said in a statement.

Very hot drinks may cause cancer': WHO

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Drinking very hot drinks such as coffee or tea "probably" causes cancer, the UN has said. It is believed the temperature, rather than the substance of the drinks, causes cancer of the oesophagus and becomes a risk once beverages have a temperature above 65C, AFP reports. The announcement follows a review of more than 1,000 scientific studies on whether there is a link between coffee and cancer, conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Christopher Wild, agency director, said: "These results suggest that drinking very hot beverages is one probable cause of oesophageal cancer and that it is the temperature, rather than the drinks themselves, that appears to be responsible." A spokesperson for the IARC said: "Studies in places such as China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and South America, where tea or mate is traditionally drunk very hot (at about 70C) found that the risk of oesophageal cancer increased with the temperature at which the beverage was drunk. "Drinking very hot beverages at above 65C was classified as 'probably' carcinogenic to humans." The World Health Organisation is due to make a number of announcements today on health concerns and benefits of drinking hot beverages such as coffee. In 1991, the IARC announced coffee "possibly caused cancer". However, the health body is expected to revise that today to suggest other than concerns over temperature, there is insufficient evidence to say coffee itself causes cancer.



Clinton wins last primary, meets Sanders

AFP, Washington
Hillary Clinton captured the mostly symbolic Democratic primary Tuesday in the US capital, the final vote of the 2016 presidential primaries, as the race shifts to her showdown with Republican rival Donald Trump. Clinton won nearly 79 percent of the vote against 21 percent for Bernie Sanders, with nearly all votes counted, according to US networks. It marked a deflating finish for the Vermont senator, who captivated liberals and independents with a grassroots campaign that mounted a surprisingly strong challenge to Clinton. Washington's primary was an afterthought as Clinton reached number of delegates needed to lock up the nomination last week. On Tuesday night, Sanders and Clinton met at a Washington hotel "and had a positive discussion about their primary campaign, about unifying the party and about the dangerous threat that Donald Trump poses to our nation," a Clinton campaign official said after the meeting. Sanders spokesman Michael Briggs said the two "had a positive discussion about how best to bring more people into the political process" and about the threat posed by Trump. Clinton and Sanders also discussed what would be on the Democratic Party platform ahead of the national convention next month in Philadelphia.

Ramadan gift?

Israel 'cuts off water supply to West Bank'

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Israel has cut off the water supply to large areas of the West Bank, Palestinian authorities have claimed. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have reportedly been left without access to safe drinking water during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, a period of fasting, at a time when temperatures can exceed 35C. The northern city of Jenin, which has a population of more than 40,000, said its water supplies had been cut in half by Mekorot, Israel's national water company. Jenin is home to a refugee camp, established in 1953, which contains 16,000 registered refugees. Ayman Rabi, the executive director of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, told Al Jazeera that in some areas people had not received water for more than 40 days. Saleh Hijazi, Amnesty International's Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories researcher, said the reports were "alarming". "Water is a basic need and a right. Mekorot should restore any water supplies to Palestinians it has cut off and the Israel authorities should end their discriminatory water policies, lifting all arbitrary restrictions it currently imposes on Palestinians' access to this vital resource." Almost 200,000 Palestinians in the West Bank do not have access to running water, and require permission before collecting it themselves, according to a report by Amnesty International.



A boat decorated with flags and banners from the 'Fishing for Leave' group campaigning for a 'leave' vote in the EU referendum sail under Westminster Bridge in London, yesterday. Britain's opposing camps took their war of words onto the water yesterday as campaigners manning rival boats hurled abuse at each other in bizarre scenes outside parliament on the River Thames. PHOTO: AFP



Obama's Dalai Lama meeting angers China

AFP, Beijing
China yesterday warned US President Barack Obama against meeting with the Dalai Lama at the White House, saying that hosting the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader could damage mutual trust. Obama has met the Dalai Lama several times before and calls the monk, who is revered by Tibetans but portrayed by Beijing as a dangerous separatist, "a good friend." The tete a tete, planned for yesterday will -- as usual -- take place behind closed doors in an effort to avoid angering China, which accuses the Nobel peace laureate of using "spiritual terrorism" to seek independence for Tibet. "China's Foreign Ministry has launched solemn representations with the US side, expressing our firm opposition to such an arrangement," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters.

Father fights as alligator drags child into water

BBC ONLINE
Florida police are searching for a two-year-old boy who was dragged into water by an alligator near a Disney resort. The boy was on the shoreline of the Seven Seas Lagoon by the Disney Grand Floridian Resort and Spa in Orlando when he was dragged away late on Tuesday, officials said. The boy's father entered the water and tried in vain to grab him from the alligator's jaws, police said. Fifty police and wildlife experts were searching for the boy, officials said. "We are searching for a little boy to hopefully bring the family some comfort," said police spokesman Jeff Williamson. Four alligators have so far been taken

from the lake and killed for examination, but no evidence of the boy has been found, police said. The family with three children from the state of Nebraska were relaxing near the shore of the lagoon when the incident happened at 21:16 local time (01:16 GMT). The Grand Floridian is a luxury resort owned by Disney and is located near Disney's Magic Kingdom Park. A Disney spokeswoman said the company was "devastated" by the incident. Alligators live across Florida and are a "fundamental part" of its wetlands, swamps, rivers and lakes, state wildlife officials say. Twenty-two people have been killed by alligators in Florida since 1948, they say.



NEW POLIO STRAIN India launches emergency vaccine drive

AFP, New Delhi
Two years after it was declared polio free, India said yesterday it was launching an emergency vaccination drive after discovering a strain of the disease that is not covered by its existing inoculations. Although no actual case of the disease has been detected, health officials said they would vaccinate hundreds of thousands of children living in Telengana where the variety of the virus was found in a sewer during routine checks. The WHO declared India polio-free in 2014, three years after its last case of the disease, hailing the achievement as a "momentous victory".

Special status bill for India fails to pass US Senate test

PTI, Washington
The Senate has failed to recognise India as a "global strategic and defence partner" of the US after a key amendment necessary to modify its export control regulations could not be passed. A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent address to a joint session of Congress, top Republican senator John McCain had moved an amendment to the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA-17), which if passed would have recognised India as a global strategic and defence partner. The US had recognised India as a "major defence partner" in a joint statement issued after Modi held talks with President Barack Obama which supported defence-related trade and technology transfer to the country which would now be treated on par with America's closest allies. NDAA was passed by the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 85-13. But some of the key amendments including the (SA 4618) - even though they had bipartisan support - could not be passed by the Senate. The McCain amendment said that the relationship between the United States and India has developed over the past two decades to become a multifaceted, global strategic and defence partnership rooted in shared democratic values and the promotion of mutual prosperity, greater economic cooperation, regional peace, security, and stability. As such it asked the president to such actions as may be necessary "to recognise the status of India as a global strategic and defence partner" of the US through appropriate modifications to defence export control regulations. It also asked the President to approve and facilitate the transfer of advanced technology in the context of, and in order to satisfy, combined military planning with the Indian military for missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, counter piracy, and maritime domain awareness.