

# NEWS IN brief

## EU extends Russian sanctions by 6 months

AFP, Brussels  
The European Union yesterday formally extended damaging economic sanctions against Russia by six months due to a lack of progress in resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The measures target the oil, financial and defence sectors of the Russian economy and were first imposed after the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in July 2014, blamed on pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine.

## Home designed jet joins Indian air force

BBC ONLINE  
The first Indian-designed fighter jet, the Tejas, has been inducted into the country's air force, 31 years after it was first conceived. The Tejas is expected to replace the ageing fleet of Russian MIG-21s.

## Duterte urges rebels to kill criminals

AFP, Manila  
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday urged communist rebels to start killing drug traffickers, adding another layer to a controversial war on crime in which he has warned thousands will die. Duterte won May's election in a landslide after a campaign dominated by his pledge to end crime within six months, promising to do so by unleashing security forces with shoot-to-kill orders.

## Myanmar frees famed activist monk

REUTERS, Yangon  
A former monk and influential leader of Myanmar's 2007 anti-junta uprising has been freed from jail and charges against him dropped, his lawyer said yesterday, just a day after new charges were levelled against him. Nyi Nyi Lwin, better known as Gambira, was arrested in January for entering Myanmar illegally from Thailand.



Palestinian men take cover from a stun grenade thrown by Israeli security forces during clashes at the Qalandia checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem yesterday.

### MIGRANT CRISIS

## 2016 sets new death record

2,900 died in 6 months  
REUTERS, London  
Nearly 2,900 migrants have died trying to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, making the first six months of 2016 the deadliest on record, according to figures published yesterday by an international migration group. Between the months of January and June, there were 2,899 recorded deaths at sea, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported, around 50 percent increase in the number of deaths when compared with the same period in 2015, when 1,838 migrants went missing or drowned at sea. In 2014, there were 743 deaths at sea by mid-year. In first six months of this year, 225,665 migrants arrived in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Spain by sea, with the central Mediterranean route to Italy claiming the most lives, accounting for nearly 2,500 deaths.

# Settlements must stop

### ME peace quartet tells Israel, says two-state solution in peril

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Israel should stop building settlements and the Palestinians should cease incitement to violence, the Middle East diplomatic quartet said in a much-awaited report yesterday aimed at reviving peace talks. The report came as Israel yesterday announced a lockdown on the West Bank city of Hebron and a reduction in monthly tax payments to the Palestinian Authority, after a wave of deadly attacks. The measures, including increasing Israel's military presence in the West Bank and described as "the most substantial" in two years, come after a surge in nine months of violence. The United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations -- which comprise the quartet -- said settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes and Israeli confiscation of land were "steadily eroding the viability of the two-state solution." "Israel should cease the policy of settlement construction and expansion, designating land for exclusive Israeli use, and denying Palestinian

development," said the report. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the report "perpetuates the myth that Israeli construction in the West Bank is an obstacle to peace", but welcomed the quartet stating the need for the PA to act "to



Netanyahu rejects quartet 'myth' Tel Aviv cut Palestinian tax transfers; slaps closure on Hebron after new West Bank violence

cease incitement to violence and strengthen ongoing efforts to combat terrorism, including by clearly condemning all acts of terrorism." Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat expressed his disappointment that the report criticised both sides.

Yesterday, two Palestinians and an Israeli were killed in a series of attacks and clashes in the West Bank. At least 214 Palestinians, 34 Israelis have been killed since the violence erupted last October. "We really are concerned that if there aren't significant changes, it will risk entrenching the one-state reality, and that will not be to the benefit of either side," said a senior State Department official in Washington. Since the beginning of the Oslo peace process in 1993, the settlement population has more than doubled, with a threefold increase in so-called Area C -- the most sought-after land in the West Bank, said the report. "This raises legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions, which are compounded by the statements of some Israeli ministers that there should never be a Palestinian state," it added. There are currently at least 570,000 settlers living in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians hope to make the capital of their future state. The United Nations has said settlements are illegal.

# West quietly cooperating with Syria regime: Assad

### US, Russia discuss military cooperation with regime

REUTERS, Amman  
Syrian President Bashar al Assad said in an interview broadcast yesterday that Western countries had sent security officials to help his government covertly in fighting Islamist militants involved in Syria's war. Assad, in remarks to Australia's SBS News channel that were carried by Syrian state media, said Western states - who are strongly opposed to his rule but also face the threat of Islamist attacks at home - were secretly cooperating with his government in counter-terrorism operations. "They attack us politically and then they send officials to deal with us under the table, especially the security, including your [the Australian] government," Assad was quoted as saying. "They don't want to upset the United States. Actually most of the Western officials, they only repeat what the United States want them to say. This is the reality," he said. There was no immediate comment

from Western governments. The report came as reports said the Obama administration is considering a plan to coordinate air strikes on Nusra Front and Islamic State militants in Syria if Syria's government stops bombing moderate rebels. The Washington Post, which first reported the plan, said the Obama administration has submitted a written proposal to Moscow, but two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that while the plan is under discussion within the administration, no decisions have been made. On the ground, separate air raids in northern Syria by regime aircraft and warplanes of the US-led international coalition killed at least 25 civilians yesterday, a monitoring group said. President Bashar al-Assad's air force attacked a crowded market in Aleppo city's rebel-held district of Tariq al-Bab, killing 11 people, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.



# Western nations exploiting Sunni-Shia rift: Rouhani

REUTERS, Ankara  
Iran's President Hassan Rouhani accused Western powers of trying to exploit differences between the world's Sunni and Shia Muslims to divert attention from the Israel-Palestinian conflict, state television reported yesterday. Rouhani's comments came as tens of thousands of Iranians joined anti-Israel rallies across the country to express support for the Palestinians. They chanted "Death to Israel" and "Death to America" and burned the Israeli flag. "The global arrogance (the United States and its allies) wants to create discord among Muslims ... Unity is the only way to restore stability in the region," Rouhani said. "We stand with the dispossessed Palestinian nation." Opposition to Israel, which Tehran refuses to recognise, has been a cornerstone of Iranian policy since its 1979 Islamic

revolution. Shia Muslim Iran backs Palestinian and Lebanese militant groups who oppose peace with Israel. "The Zionist regime (Israel) is a regional base for America and the global arrogance ... Disunity and discord among Muslim and terrorist groups in the region ... have diverted us from the important issue of Palestine," Rouhani said. Shia-led Iran has repeatedly called on its Sunni Muslim rival Saudi Arabia to help improve their strained bilateral relations and work for stability in the Middle East. Arch-rivals for regional hegemony, the two oil producers are on opposite sides in proxy battles in the region, where they back competing factions in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Bahrain. Ties have worsened since Riyadh's execution in January of prominent Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr prompted attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran.



# 2.3m Leave voters regret their choice

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK  
Up to 7 percent of the people who voted for a Brexit in the EU referendum now regret their choice, new research has found. When the survey's findings are projected on to last week's vote, they would cut the Leave share by 1.2 million, almost wiping out the majority that gave the shock result. Research by Opinium found that 3 percent of those who voted Remain also regretted their choice. More than half of those surveyed also felt both the UK's economy and position in the world had worsened, but almost one in 10 said they did not believe the Brexit would be implemented.



French President Francois Hollande (2ndL) smiles with Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron (L), Prince William and his wife Catherine as they arrive to attend a ceremony at the Franco-British National Memorial in Thiepval near Albert, during the commemorations to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Somme, northern France, yesterday.

# Safety bracelets for hajj pilgrims

AFP, Riyadh  
Muslim pilgrims joining this year's hajj in Saudi Arabia will have to wear an electronic safety bracelet, newspapers reported yesterday, after more than 2,000 died in a stampede last year. The bracelets are water resistant, connected to a GPS location system, and store each pilgrim's personal information including address and medical records, the newspapers said. In another safety measure, more than 800 surveillance cameras have been installed at Makkah's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site, the Saudi Gazette reported.

# ISTANBUL AIRPORT CARNAGE Bombers 'planned hostage-taking'

AFP, Istanbul  
The suicide attackers who launched the deadly Istanbul airport assault were planning to take dozens of passengers hostage, Turkish media reported yesterday, as two of the bombers were identified. Turkish officials have pointed blame at the Islamic State jihadist group for Tuesday night's gun and bomb spree at Ataturk airport, which left 44 people dead including 19 foreigners. "They say they are doing this in the name of Islam," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on a visit to Istanbul. "That has nothing to do with Islam. Their place is in hell," he added. State-run news agency Anadolu said 11 more people had been detained in Istanbul in a string of raids over the attack yesterday. The arrests by counter-terror police in the European side of Istanbul brought to 24 the number of people detained in the investigation. Citing a prosecution source, the agency named two of the attackers as Rakim Bulgarov and Vadim Osmanov, without giving their nationalities. Officials had previously said the three bombers were a Russian, an Uzbek and a Kyrgyz national. Turkish media identified the strike's organiser as Akhmed Chatayev, the Chechen leader of an IS cell in Istanbul who reportedly found accommodation for the bombers.

# 'First you exit then talk' EU tells UK over trade negotiations; Theresa May ahead as Gove makes his case to replace Cameron

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Crisis deepened yesterday as UK and EU politicians have given very different accounts of how the UK's Brexit negotiations should proceed. The EU's Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmstrom, says the UK cannot begin negotiating trade terms with the bloc until after it has left. "First you exit then you negotiate," she told BBC Newsnight. But one of the candidates to be next UK PM, Liam Fox, called that stance "bizarre and stupid", saying the Brexit talks would include trade. At the EU summit this week the 27 government leaders - without the UK - agreed Brexit "divorce" talks should begin and end before any talks on a new settlement for the UK. Brussels sources told BBC there was a real determination among the leaders not to mix the two. In Britain, support grew yesterday for British interior minister Theresa May's bid to succeed premier David Cameron and

lead the country out of the EU, after Boris Johnson's shock withdrawal from the race. Dozens of Conservative MPs have backed her bid to take over from Cameron, who announced his resignation after losing a referendum last week in which 52 percent of Britons voted to quit the EU. May supported the "Remain" campaign but has assured "Leave" supporters she will proceed with Brexit although she said she would not begin formal talks with the EU before the end of the year. Justice minister Michael Gove, a top Brexit campaigner who torpedoed former London mayor Johnson's chances by announcing his own candidacy on Thursday, is seen as May's main rival. "This country voted for change and I am going to deliver it," he said in a speech in which he repeatedly stressed May's support for "Remain". "The best person to lead Britain out of the European Union is someone who argued to get Britain out of the European Union," he said, adding that he would clamp down on immigration if he becomes leader.

# If Brexit can happen, Trump can win too Hollande says the GOP candidate's win can complicate US, EU ties

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK  
The president of France has launched a scathing attack on Republican candidate Donald Trump, saying relations between the US and Europe would be complicated if the New York tycoon wins the White House. In comments that were surprisingly outspoken for a sitting head of state about another country's political candidate, Francois Hollande urged Democrats to work to ensure the victory of Hillary Clinton. He said those who believed it was impossible for Trump to win, were the same people who failed to predict the outcome of Britain's referendum on EU membership. "Those who claim that Donald Trump cannot be the next president of the United States are the same who claimed that Brexit would never be voted in," Hollande said in an interview with the French newspaper Les Echos. Hollande, a socialist, likened Trump's controversial policies to the fear-mongering tactics of far-right movements in the EU. "His slogans are not that different from [those of] the far right in Europe and in France: fear of the wave of immigration, stigmatisation of Islam, questioning of representative democracy," he said.