

# Iraq warns of 'regional war' over Turkey meddlings

AFP, Ankara

Iraq and Turkey yesterday summoned their respective ambassadors in a bitter war of words between the two neighbours ahead of a planned operation to retake the Iraqi city of Mosul from jihadists.

The dispute centres around Turkish troops deployed near Mosul, a presence that Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has strongly opposed and said he fears could lead to "regional war."

The Turkish parliament at the weekend extended by one year a government mandate allowing its troops to deploy on both Iraqi and Syrian territory.

The Iraqi parliament condemned the decision, calling for the withdrawal of the Turkish troops already there.

"We do not want to enter a regional conflict," Abadi told a news conference in Baghdad, saying he fears "the Turkish adventure will turn into a regional war."

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned of possible sectarian consequences arising from the Mosul operation, prompting the Iraqi foreign ministry to summon the Turkish ambassador over "provocative Turkish statements".

Mosul, Iraq's second city, was seized by the Islamic State (IS) group in 2014 after multiple Iraqi divisions collapsed in the face of a jihadist assault.

But Baghdad is now planning, with help from a US-led coalition, a major operation to retake the city, which had a population of two million before the IS invasion.

Ankara has made clear it does not want to be left on the sidelines.

Abadi has repeatedly expressed his opposition to the presence of Turkish troops on Iraqi soil and demanded that they be withdrawn.



A migrant waits to be rescued by members of Proactiva Open Arms NGO in the Mediterranean sea, some 12 nautical miles north of Libya, on Tuesday. Inset, An overcrowded migrant boat. PHOTO: AFP

## MIGRANT HELL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

# 32 die in one day, 4,655 rescued

AFP, Aboard The Astral

At least 32 Europe-bound migrants were found dead on a day of frantic rescues off Libya on Tuesday, an AFP photographer on board one of the rescue boats said.

The photographer said yesterday that at least 29 people had died in a crush on board a overcrowded rubber dinghy and that three had died on a bigger wooden vessel that was carrying between 700 and 1,000 people.

The Italian coastguard -- which is coordinating rescue efforts in international waters north of Libya -- said late Tuesday that 28 bodies had been recovered over the course of 33 operations on Tuesday, while 4,655 migrants had been rescued.

The photographer was travelling on the Astral, a ship chartered by Spanish NGO ProActiva Open Arms, which helps with migrant rescues at sea.

It was yet another day of drama at sea after more than 6,000 migrants, most of them Africans in packed rubber dinghies, were rescued off Libya on Monday. Nine bodies were found in those operations.

With numerous rescue boats en route to Italy

to unload the huge human cargo collected on Monday, the Astral was left alone to deal with the overloaded wooden boat for several hours.

It was aided only by lifeboats dropped by a Spanish military plane until the navy arrived at midday.

There was panic, with many people jumping into the water, according to the photographer.

The Astral's rescue operations had begun before dawn and lasted until nightfall.

The latest people to be rescued will add to a total of some 132,000 migrants who have landed at Italy's southern ports so far this year, fleeing conflict, poverty or persecution and hoping to start new lives in Europe.

The numbers are in line with the previous two years but Italy is now having to register and accommodate a bigger proportion of them under pressure from its EU partners, putting immense strain on its overcrowded reception centres and government coffers.

The new arrivals are mostly Africans who plan to try to get to northern Europe but increasingly are obliged to seek asylum or the right to remain in Italy, where reception centres have been strained to bursting point.

# Syria to ease Aleppo air campaign

AFP, Damascus

Syria's military yesterday announced a surprise reduction in bombardment of rebel groups in devastated Aleppo, nearly two weeks after declaring an all-out assault to capture the city.

Syria's government announced a large-scale offensive to capture the whole city last month, ushering in a bombing campaign that killed more than 270 people.

But on Wednesday, Syria's military said it would reduce the bombardment "after the success of our armed forces in Aleppo and cutting off all terrorist supply routes into the eastern districts".

Meanwhile, France yesterday launched a new drive for Aleppo ceasefire. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault will travel to Moscow today and Washington a day after to try to garner support for the

# 'Can't end poverty with tanks'

## Says Pak PM; Modi warns against 'chest thumping' over 'surgical strikes'

AGENCIES

Even as his government continued to insist that India had not conducted surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC), Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif hit out at India for its 'aggression'.

However, his speech to a joint session of the Pakistan parliament was blunted by a scathing attack by the opposition on his government's foreign policy foibles.

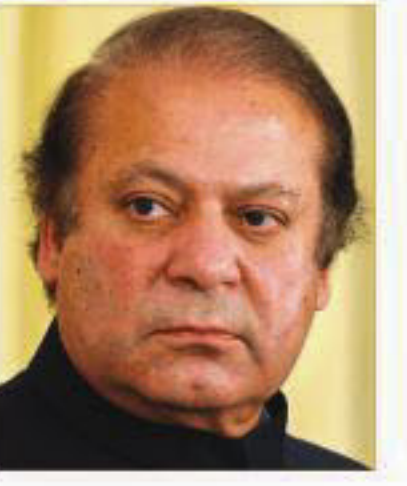
"They want us to compete with them to end poverty. They should realize that poverty will not end if tanks are being driven through farmlands," Sharif said as he attempted to respond to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's taunt asking Pakistan to battle India on who can eradicate poverty and illiteracy first.

He also maintained to the joint session his government's line that the Indian military had not crossed the LoC and had not conducted any strikes.

The joint session of Pakistan's Senate and National Assembly had been called to paint a picture of political unity. That hope was dashed by the boycott of the session by the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Sharif's speech did little to stave off

a further erosion of the image of political unity. Opposition leader Syed Khurshid Shah, of the PPP, lashed out at the Sharif government's diplomatic failures. "India openly says they are going to isolate Pakistan. We have to ask ourselves why our foreign policy is so weak, why Pakistan feels isolated in the international arena. The Saarc Summit is an example," he said.



"Five countries refused to attend the summit. We should have anticipated and countered this. Also, two of the countries that pulled out were Muslim countries. Afghanistan and Bangladesh continue to grow further apart from us," Shah added.

As tension over the strikes persists, Modi is understood to have cautioned his Cabinet colleagues against creating a

hysteria.

During the Cabinet meeting yesterday, he is understood to have told his ministerial colleagues that only authorised people should speak on the issue of surgical strikes and one should avoid speaking out of turn, sources said.

His word of caution came as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and a Congress leader of Mumbai Sanjay Nirupam had asked the government to release the proof of the surgical strikes to counter the 'Pakistani propaganda' against the operation.

The Indian army yesterday handed over to the government video clips of the strikes, a federal minister said. Now it is up to Modi whether to make the video public, reports said.

On the intervening night of last Wednesday-Thursday, Indian army's special personnel had carried out the strikes targeting seven to eight terror launch pads in Pakistan-occupied territory. The army said "significant casualties" had been caused in the strikes seen as retaliation for the September 18 attack by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed on an army camp in Jammu and Kashmir's Uri last month in which 19 Indian soldiers were killed.

# Choose path to peace

Kerry calls on Taliban as Afghanistan wins aid pledges

AFP, Brussels

US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday urged Afghanistan's Taliban militants to follow the recent example of a notorious warlord and make an "honourable" peace with the Kabul government.

Kerry said a peace deal signed last month by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who heads the

emerge from the shadows to rejoin Afghan society." He added: "The message for the Taliban would be: take note."

Hekmatyar, widely known as the "butcher of Kabul" in Afghanistan, was a prominent anti-Soviet commander in the 1980s who stands accused of killing thousands of people in the Afghan capital during the 1992-1996 civil war.

At the conference, world powers pledged billions of dollars for war-ravaged Afghanistan until 2020.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini announced that the 28-nation bloc will pledge 1.2 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) a year and said "I

would expect similar levels of engagement from our partners."

"There will not be any donor fatigue on Afghanistan," she added.

Mogherini said a dinner of key regional players including China, India and Pakistan on Tuesday night had "found common ground" for the Afghan peace process.



A man cuts branches off fallen trees in a flooded area after Hurricane Matthew left a train of destruction in Haiti, in Les Cayes, Haiti, yesterday. Hurricane Matthew, the fiercest Caribbean storm in almost a decade, powered toward the Bahamas and Florida's eastern coast yesterday after battering Haiti and Cuba with torrential rains and killing at least 17 people. PHOTO: REUTERS

# NEWSIN brief

## Brussels cops stabbed in 'terror attack'

AFP, Brussels

An attacker stabbed two police officers in the Belgian capital Brussels yesterday in a possible terror incident, the latest attack in a city still reeling from deadly Islamic State bombings in March. Prosecutors identified the man, who was later shot in the leg, as 43-year-old Hicham D., a Belgian national, while reports said he was a former soldier with ties to jihadists who had gone to fight in Syria.

## Climate pact to enter into force in 30 days

AFP, Paris

The landmark Paris climate deal will enter into force in 30 days, after being ratified by 72 countries accounting for more than 56 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the UN's climate body said yesterday. Inked outside the French capital in December by 195 nations, the world's first universal climate treaty vows to cap global warming at well under two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

## Turkey sacks 540 more soldiers in coup purge

REUTERS, Ankara

Turkey dismissed 540 soldiers from its naval and air forces command over suspected links with US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen and his network, accused by Ankara of orchestrating a failed coup in July, the defence ministry said. On July 15, a rogue faction within the military staged an attempted coup in which more than 240 people were killed.

# Marshalls Islands loses case

World court rejects allegations against India, Pakistan and UK for failing to halt the nuclear arms race

AFP, The Hague

The UN's highest court yesterday narrowly threw out landmark cases brought by the tiny Marshall Islands against India, Pakistan and Britain for allegedly failing to halt the nuclear arms race.

In majority decisions, the 16-judge bench at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled there was no evidence that islanders had had a prior dispute with any of the three nuclear giants or sought bilateral negotiations on the issue.

"The court upholds the objection to jurisdiction" raised by each of the countries, presiding judge Ronny Abraham said in separate rulings, and therefore the tribunal "cannot proceed to the merits of the case."

The tiny Pacific island nation was ground zero for a string of devastating nuclear tests on its pristine atolls between 1946-58, carried out by the United States as the Cold War arms race gathered momentum.

failing to comply with the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which seeks to inhibit the spread of atomic bombs.

But the ICJ already refused to take up cases against the other countries -- China, France, Israel, North Korea, Russia and the United States -- as they have not recognised the court's jurisdiction.

The Marshall Islands had argued that by not stopping the nuclear arms race Britain, India and Pakistan had breached obligations under the treaty.

At a March hearing, Majuro's lawyers painted a vivid picture of the horrors seen after 67 nuclear tests were carried out on Bikini and Enewetak atolls.

"Several islands in my country were vapourised and others are estimated to remain uninhabitable for thousands of years," Tony deBrum, a former Marshall Islands foreign minister, told the court.

Critics have argued however that the ICJ action is a distraction and that the islanders' real fight is with Washington, which carried out the tests in their backyard.

## NUKE DISARMAMENT DRIVE



# Candidates wage proxy wars

AFP, Farmville

The two candidates for US vice president launched bitter attacks on the reputations and policies of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump Tuesday during a fiery debate five weeks from Election Day.

Polls show Clinton gaining in the wake of a punishing week for her Republican rival Trump, who has been hammered by controversies over his taxes and his treatment of women.

Democrat Tim Kaine, a senator from Virginia, took aim at Trump from the beginning, saying the idea of the brash Republican as commander-in-chief "scars us to death."

An imperturbable Republican Mike Pence, governor of Indiana and a Christian conservative, calmly shot back.

"We see entire portions of the world, particularly the wider Middle East, spinning out of control. The situation we're watching hour-by-hour in Syria today is the result of

the weak foreign policy that Hillary Clinton helped lead in this administration and create."

The two men repeatedly talked over each other as they clashed about Trump's failure to release his tax records, social security, how to handle an aggressive Russia, and the prospect of mounting debt, forcing moderator Elaine Quijano to intervene.

Pence stressed that a Trump administration would want the United States to "use military force to strike the targets of the Assad regime" if Russia continues its involvement in "this barbaric attack on Aleppo."

But the Republican clearly distanced himself from Trump's praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin, hailing the US system as "superior to the crony corrupt cabal system in Russia in every way."

A second round of presidential debates is set for Sunday.

## US VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

