

IRISH MUSLIM HELD BY EGYPT 'HAS LOST 30 KILOS'



Family of Ibrahim Halawa, held in an Egyptian prison awaiting trial since 2013, says Irish government could do more to help. Two-and-a-half years after he was arrested in the chaos of a Cairo protest, one man was told last week that his trial was to be delayed for the thirteenth time. The 20-year-old is one of a huge number of people – 493 defendants in all – facing a mass trial connected to the events that occurred during a mosque siege in August 2013. >>EUROPE

PROPHET MUHAMMAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



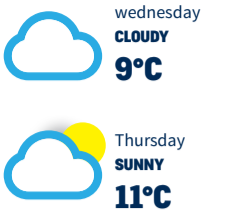
Analysis of agreements with Christians finds Islam's Prophet Muhammad considered civic rights also hugely important. Religious freedom and civic rights were considered important facets of a "Muslim nation" according to the Prophet Muhammad -- peace be upon him --, researchers said Monday in a new analysis of early Islamic agreements with Christians. The study revolved around covenants developed by the Prophet Muhammad and Christians living in Muslim-controlled areas. >>WORLD

TURKEY, ATTRACTIVE MKT. FOR NUCLEAR POWER



EUAS inked multi-party deal for 3rd nuke plant in Nov. 2014 with Westinghouse and China's State Nuclear Power Tech. Corp. U.S.-based Energy Company, Westinghouse considers Turkey an attractive market for the development of nuclear power projects, according to the senior vice president of the company in a recent interview. "Because we truly think that nuclear power plant projects make sense to Turkey," Jeff Benjamin, senior vice president of New Plants and Major Projects told Anadolu Agency. >>ENERGY

WEATHER / ANKARA



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Erdogan: 'Ankara attack not to diminish will to fight terror'

'Those who want to settle accounts by spilling blood of innocent people will never bring Turkey to its knees,' Turkish president says post Ankara attack

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has again strongly condemned Sunday's bombing in Ankara, calling it an attack on every Turkish citizen. Addressing a joint press conference alongside Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at the Presidential Palace in Ankara

Tuesday, Erdogan described the Ankara blast as a "cowardly terrorist attack against all of Turkey and all the 79 million Turkish people". Erdogan said that while the attack targeted the country's integrity as well as unity and solidarity of people, it "does not diminish

our will to fight against terror". The car bomb attack in Ankara's central Kizilay neighborhood Sunday evening hit a major public transportation hub, killing 37 people and injuring dozens others. >>MORE DETAILS

Ankara attack involved female suicide bomber

Turkish deputy PM says DNA tests are also being done on one male to check if he was bomber or victimal



Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus has said it is now certain that a suicide bomber involved in Sunday's Ankara deadly blast

was a female. Addressing a news conference following a Cabinet meeting chaired by Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in Anka-

ra Monday, Kurtulmus said: "This is now certain that a woman was the suicide bomber. I hope that she will be identified until late hours of today [Monday] night after DNA tests". About the possibility of another bomber being involved in the terrorist attack, Kurtulmus said: "DNA tests on one male are also being carried out to check if he was bomber or victim", adding that so far the identity of this male is not certain. Also, he said, 10 more people are now wanted

in connection with the car bomb blast in central Kizilay neighborhood, which left 37 people dead and dozens others injured. The car bomb targeted a major transport hub that includes Ankara's busiest metro station and dozens of bus stops. According to a statement released by Turkish Health Ministry at midday Monday, 48 patients continue to receive treatment at hospitals across the capital; 15 remain in intensive care. >>MORE DETAILS



Putin announces reduction of Russian forces in Syria

Russia will start withdrawing "most" of its forces from Syria Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced Monday. "I think that the tasks set to the Defense Ministry are generally fulfilled. That is why I order to begin withdrawal of most of our military group from Syria starting from tomorrow," Russian News Agen-

cy TASS quoted Putin as saying. His remarks came Monday at a meeting with Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. However, Russian bases in Syria's Tartus and Khmeimim are to continue operating in a routine mode, Russian agency reported. "They are to be safely protected from the land,

from the sea and from air," it quoted Putin as telling the defense and foreign ministers. According to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, Putin also discussed and coordinated the decision on beginning of withdrawal of Russia's forces from Syria with his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad, the agency added. >>MORE DETAILS

UK: 'Good basis' exists for Turkey migrant deal



A "good basis" for a deal with Turkey on migrants has emerged ahead of this week's summit of European Union leaders, according to the U.K. Prime Minister's office. A spokesperson for David Cameron said an agreement between Turkey and the EU could "break the business model" of people smuggling across the Aegean Sea. Turkey agreed last week to accept back migrants taking the perilous sea route to Greece in exchange for six billion euros (\$6.6 billion) to care for refugees on its soil, as well as visa-free travel

for its nationals within four months and swifter EU accession talks. The comments from Cameron's office came after he made a condolence call to Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu following Sunday night's Ankara bombing. Cameron's spokesperson said: "The Prime Minister offered Turkey support, including sharing any information on the incident. Prime Minister Davutoglu welcomed this and said that the Turkish government had already been in touch with our embassy. >>MORE DETAILS

New round of Syria talks begin in Geneva



A new round of peace talks to resolve the Syria crisis began Monday in Geneva. UN Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura met a Bashar al-Assad regime delegation led by Syria's UN Ambassador Bashar Jaafari during the talks. Addressing a press conference after meeting

with de Mistura, Jaafari said his delegation had "positive and constructive" talks with the UN envoy. "It was a useful meeting and I think we clarified quite a lot issues," De Mistura said. The delegation will meet with de Mistura again Wednesday. >>MORE DETAILS

Myanmar elects 1st civilian president in decades

Myanmar's parliament has elected its first civilian president in more than a half-century, four months after democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the national election in a landslide. Htin Kyaw -- a non-elected legislator and Suu Kyi's longtime aide -- will take power April 1, after more than 300 of the 652 lawmakers at the union parliament in political capital Nay Pyi Taw voted in his favor. Talking to reporters after today's vote, the first-ever opposition member to be

elected head of state said "This is a victory of the people." Military nominee Myint Swe and the NLD's secondary nominee Henry Van Thio were elected as vice-president one, and vice president two respectively. On Friday, 69-year-old academic Htin Kyaw -- the executive of a non-profit charity organization -- won a lower house vote by more than 85 percent to qualify for today's round of voting, while Henry Van Thio, an ethnic Chin Christian NLD MP, won that of the upper house. >>MORE DETAILS

Turkish military rejects Russia's Syria safe zone claims

Turkish military has denied Russian claims it is trying to create safe zones inside Syrian territory. Turkish General Staff said in a statement Monday that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's claims about the military violating Syrian territory were "baseless". Lavrov had accused Turkey of starting to declare its sovereign right to create some safe zones inside Syria. "According to our data, they have already 'dug themselves in' several hundred meters from the border in Syria. ... It's a sort of creeping expansion," Lavrov told Russian television channel Ren-TV Sunday. >>MORE DETAILS

Turkey assigns new security chief for Ankara

A police chief from the eastern Turkish province of Van has been assigned as head of security for the capital Ankara. Mahmut Karaaslan will now be director of Ankara's Provincial Security Directorate, Turkey's official gazette announced late on Monday. The assignment came after a car bomb attack in Ankara's central Kizilay neighborhood during Sunday's evening rush hour left 37 people dead and injured 43 others. There were criticisms after the attack that there was no permanent police chief in Ankara, only an acting director of security. In the wake of the twin suicide bombings that rocked the city in October, killing 97 people, Ankara police chief, Kadri Kartal, was removed amid an Interior Ministry review on the incident. >>MORE DETAILS

Turkish jets bomb PKK targets in northern Iraq

Turkish airstrikes in northern Iraq have "neutralized" 45 PKK terrorists, a military source said on Tuesday. Nine F-16 and two F-4 jets carried out the raids on PKK positions in Qandil and Gara on March 14, the source said on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to the media. Shelters, caves and gun emplacements were destroyed. The airstrikes came after a car bomb in Ankara that killed at least 37 people and injured 43 others. >>MORE DETAILS