

## BURKINA PRESIDENT RESUMES POWER AS COUP ENDS

**OUAGADOUGOU:** Burkina Faso's toppled interim President Michel Kafando resumed power yesterday after a week-long coup by renegade troops, who caved in under pressure from regional powers and former colonial ruler France.

The move came after marathon talks in the capital of regional and military heavy-weight Nigeria, brokered by the ECOWAS West African regional bloc, and threats by French President Francois Hollande that the coup leaders could face sanctions if they did not hand back power. "The transition has been restored and this very minute I am resuming the exercise of power," Kafando told reporters.

Six ECOWAS heads of state were meanwhile arriving in the Burkinabe capital Ouagadougou to oversee the formal reinstallation of Kafando and to try and sort out two contentious issues: an amnesty plan for the putsches and whether upcoming elections should be open to supporters of previously deposed veteran dictator Blaise Compaore.

Kafando said the regional leaders would "take into account the will of the Burkinabe people" in their new mediation bid. The deal to restore the interim administration to power was signed overnight after troops entered

Ouagadougou, turning up the pressure on the elite presidential guards (RSP) who staged the coup. Under its terms, the RSP agreed to stand down from the positions they had taken up in Ouagadougou, while the army also agreed to withdraw its troops and guarantee the safety of the RSP members as well as their families. The accord was presented to the Mogho Naba, "king" of Burkina Faso's leading Mossi tribe, in front of the media early yesterday.

Burkina Faso was plunged into crisis last Wednesday when the powerful RSP detained the interim leaders who had been running the country since a popular uprising deposed iron-fisted president Compaore last October after his failed bid to extend his 27-year rule. The elite unit of 1,300 men loyal to Compaore officially declared a coup Thursday and installed rebel leader General Gilbert Diendere, Compaore's former chief of staff, as the country's new leader.

The breakthrough came as Diendere told AFP that interim president Michel Kafando, who had been seized by presidential guards but later released, would be returned to office yesterday. The return of "Kafando is already a done deal. The (African) heads of state arrive tomorrow to put him back in office," Diendere said late Tuesday.



**OUAGADOUGOU:** A protester holds a sign reading "Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP) = Boko Haram" during a protest not far from the hotel where leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were holding a meeting. — AFP

### Fighting talk

The putsch came just weeks ahead of an election planned for October 11, with at least 10 people killed and more than 100

injured in the resulting unrest. A round of talks mediated by Senegalese President Macky Sall focused on returning power to the interim government while granting the

putschists an amnesty in return. But the proposal was met with widespread scepticism before any final draft even saw the light.

Speaking to France's RFI radio, Kafando had warned he had "serious reservations" about the proposal, adding that he had not been invited to the talks in the Nigerian capital. Residents too were furious at the suggestion of an amnesty for the coup ring-leaders. It was unclear early yesterday if the amnesty had made it into the deal signed between the coup leaders and the army.

On Tuesday, Burkina Faso's military had warned coup leader Diendere it has the means to attack his elite forces. Diendere had hit back, saying his men would defend themselves if the army attacked them. "We do not want to fight but ultimately we will defend ourselves," Diendere had warned. ECOWAS commission president Kadre Desire Ouedraogo, a former Burkinabe prime minister, said Tuesday that military and humanitarian observers from member states would be sent to Burkina Faso "to monitor respect for human rights". The coup had sparked global condemnation, with France urging the leaders to surrender immediately or face the "consequences", including possible sanctions. — AFP

## EYE OF THE STORM: MIGRANTS TRICKLE IN AT SWISS BORDER

'SITUATION STABLE, BUT TOMORROW THAT COULD CHANGE'

**CHIASSO:** Border guards in crisp blue uniforms rush onto the train as it grinds to a halt, quickly rounding up around a dozen African men and herding them into a nearby hall. Between 30 and 150 migrants and refugees are intercepted each day at the train station in the small southern Swiss town of Chiasso. The numbers pale in comparison to the waves of migrants and refugees taking the perilous Mediterranean route to Greece and on

ment and member of the populist rightwing Lega dei Ticinesi party, meanwhile said border closures and tighter border controls elsewhere could easily push large numbers towards Switzerland.

"We are in the process of planning for possibly managing thousands of arrivals per day," he told AFP in his office in the regional capital Bellinzona. Switzerland, which has already taken in some 9,000 Syrians since the

town of just 8,000 inhabitants—more than double the number during the same period last year.

Chiasso, which historically has served as the main migrant gateway to Switzerland, has withstood greater numbers in the past, with hundreds crossing each day during the Balkan war in the 1990s. But the current rise is wearing on both the Swiss population and asylum seekers already in the town who are facing growing anti-immigrant sentiment. "You can feel it," said former Ethiopian government regulator Meleket Woldeichael, who has been waiting in Chiasso for five years for a decision on his asylum application. But, the 53-year-old insisted, "it's natural... They are afraid for their own security, so even if they say anti-immigrant feelings, you have to understand them. I'm not saying that they're right."

### 23 days at sea

Chiasso mayor Moreno Colombo meanwhile stressed the need to prepare for a surge in arrivals "while the situation is calm", and said the town had asked for more border guards. Some reinforcements have already arrived. At the Chiasso station, a guard sent from Switzerland's German-speaking region, wearing a buzz-cut, steel-rimmed glasses and blue plastic gloves, questioned the Eritreans and Gambians pulled off the latest train from Milan. "Why have you come? Do you know where you are?" he asked, over-enunciating to make himself understood. The men and boys looked dazed as they were finger-printed and given bright yellow bracelets with new ID numbers. They were also asked if they wished to seek asylum. It's a crucial question: If they says yes, they can remain in Switzerland while the application is processed, but if they instead want to go elsewhere in Europe they will be sent back to Italy.

That is because Switzerland, while not part of the European Union, is part of the Dublin Treaty, under which asylum claims must be processed by the first European country refugees arrive in. A Somali woman, clutching a six-month-old baby still sick after spending 23 days at sea in the Mediterranean listened intently as the guards explained what would happen once her asylum application had been filed. The pair would be taken to the registration centre in Chiasso for medical examinations and then to an asylum centre elsewhere in Switzerland. After she had been gently led off, one of the guards sighed heavily. "I'm conflicted. The large numbers arriving means problems for Switzerland," he said. "But it's so tough to hear their stories and try to imagine what I might do in their situation." — AFP

conflict there exploded in March 2011, last week agreed to take in 1,500 of the 40,000 asylum seekers European countries want resettled from overstretched Greece and Italy. Not many Syrians are crossing into Chiasso for the time being, however. Most arriving here, by train, car or on foot, are from a range of African countries and have first travelled to Libya before attempting the perilous Mediterranean crossing to Italy. While they so far make up only a fraction of the over half million migrants who have arrived in Europe this year, their numbers are climbing. Between June and August, around 5,000 crossed the border into the



**NICKELSDORF:** Syrian refugee girl Sondos Almasri, 9, who suffers from cold, is comforted by her mother after spending the night at a collection point in the truck parking lot of the former border station on the Austrian side of the Hungarian-Austrian border. — AFP

up through the Balkans towards more hospitable countries in northern Europe. But this lazy border town in Switzerland's Italian-speaking Ticino region is bracing for an expected influx as crowds of migrants try to navigate a growing number of closed borders in the east and as the number of possible routes dwindles. "At the moment, everything is under control, the situation is stable, but tomorrow that could change," said Patrick Benz, head of the Swiss border guards' migration unit.

### Thousands per day

Norman Gobbi, head of Ticino's regional govern-

## NEW TSIPRAS GOV'T TAKES OATH OF OFFICE IN GREECE

**ATHENS:** Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' new left-wing government took office yesterday with a painful economic reforms ahead and a growing migration crisis that threatens to open a rift in the EU. Tsipras barely had time to see his cabinet sworn into office before flying to Brussels for an emergency migration summit, a day after EU ministers forced through a controversial deal to relocate 120,000 refugees, angering several member states in the process.

In statements after his election victory on Sunday, Tsipras said Europe had failed to give adequate support to Athens and called for "shared responsibility" in managing the influx of migrants from Syria and elsewhere. The new Greek cabinet is almost a carbon copy of the previous government headed by the 41-year-old premier, who resigned in August after seven months in office after losing his majority when anti-euro hardliners in his Syriza party quit in anger over an economic reform-and-rescue deal.

### Keeping the balance

The liberal daily Kathimerini said yesterday that Tsipras had been careful to reward loyal Syriza cadres who supported him against the hardliners. "Tsipras' basic criterion was to keep the balance in his party... and reward those who stood at his side on the bailout issue," the daily said.

Sending a signal to creditors, Tsipras

kept the same team that negotiated the country's latest EU bailout. Pro-euro Euclid Tsakalotos retains the finance ministry portfolio while George Houliarakis, the reclusive expert who led the country's rocky bailout negotiations with EU and IMF envoys, has been appointed junior finance minister. EU economic affairs commissioner Pierre Moscovici expressed delight to have Tsakalotos back at the post.

"Happy to continue working together to help Greece," Moscovici tweeted yesterday. Several members of the cabinet noted that their first order of business was to revive the Greek economy, which is still bound by capital controls imposed by Tsipras in June to avert a deposit run. "Our goal is recovery and reconstruction," deputy Prime Minister Yiannis Dragasakis told reporters before the ceremony. "We have the prerequisites to overcome the difficulties," he said, adding that the government wanted to leave "left-wing fingerprints" at the end of its term.

Senior Syriza figures also insist they will propose alternative policies to mitigate some of the toughest bailout cuts. "We will try to implement our policies, which include the bailout, but there are limitless possibilities for work that reduces the negative impacts of the deal," said state minister Alekos Flambouraris.

Panos Kammenos, the boisterous head of the nationalist Independent

Greeks (ANEL) party in the government coalition, was once again given the defense portfolio. Nikos Kotzias, the former senior Communist who clashed with EU peers over the Ukraine crisis, returns to the foreign ministry, and the key migration portfolio remains in the hands of Ioannis Mouzalas, who as interim minister before the election helped ease

pressure on Greek islands swamped by refugee arrivals. One new arrival has raised eyebrows—an ANEL lawmaker who has repeatedly made anti-Semitic comments on social media, and was appointed junior works minister. The new government has 16 ministers and 30 deputy ministers, but only four women including the spokeswoman. — AFP



**ATHENS:** Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (right) chats with Greek President Prokypis Pavlopoulos as they attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new government at the presidential palace. — AFP

## SCHOOLBOY INTERROGATED FOR SAYING 'ECO-TERRORIST'

**LONDON:** A Muslim teenager was interrogated by British child protection services about possible links to the Islamic State group after he used the word "eco-terrorist" in a French class, The Guardian reported yesterday. The 14-year-old boy used the word during a lesson as part of a discussion at his school in central London about environmental activism, according to the report.

A few days later he was pulled out of class and taken to a room where he was questioned by two people, one of whom was a child protection officer, the left-of-centre daily said. He was asked if he was "affiliated" with IS—also known as ISIS—or had heard of the militant group, it added. "I didn't know what was going on," the unnamed boy was quoted as saying. "They said there had been safety concerns raised. If you are taken out of French class and asked about ISIS, it is quite scary. My heart skipped a beat." A new law from this year places a legal duty on British schools to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". The boys' parents are reportedly seek-

ing a judicial review, claiming that the child was discriminated against because he was a Muslim.

The teenager explained in legal documents seen by the Guardian that he had used the word "eco-terrorist" to refer to people who "take action such as spiking trees with nails to prevent chainsaws from chopping them down". The Central Foundation boys' school reportedly told the Guardian it was respecting government guidance including the "Prevent duty", an initiative which aims to stop people engaging in terrorism.

The newspaper said the incident shone a light on how schools were dealing with Britain's new anti-terrorism initiatives. A spokesman for the school said: "The safeguarding and the wellbeing of our young people is our primary concern. The school is confident that its safeguarding policies and the work of the professionals in the operation of these policies are proportionate, justified and place the wellbeing of the child to the fore." — AFP

## SPAIN'S FOREIGN MINISTER WARNS CATALANS WILL LOSE NATIONALITY

**MADRID:** Catalonia's 7.5 million residents would automatically lose their Spanish nationality, and consequently their European citizenship, if the regional government that emerges from this weekend's local elections decides to declare independence, Spain's foreign minister said yesterday.

Jose Manuel Garcia Margallo said that when one splits from a country, one loses the benefits of belonging to that country. He said the claim that Catalans could maintain Spanish nationality after independence was mistaken. Margallo said the last time such a situation happened was when Algeria declared independence from France in 1962 and its citizens lost French nationality and the right to European citizenship.

Catalan nationalists argue that the Spanish Constitution entitles those with Spanish nationality to keep it and that Catalans would be able to keep both their Spanish nationality and European passports. Margallo's warning was the latest against independence from Spanish officials as voters in the economically powerful northeastern region prepare to elect regional lawmakers Sunday.

Pro-secession parties say they will establish independence within 18 months if they win a majority of seats in the 165-seat regional parliament. Most opinion polls predict they will win a seat majority but may fall short of a majority of votes, throwing the legitimacy of any eventual secession push into question.

On Monday, Spain's Central Bank said Catalonia would be automatically ejected from the European Union and the eurozone if it were to declare independence. Spanish bank associations have also warned that banking groups might have to reconsider their positions in Catalonia in the case of independence. Secession leaders insist that ways would be found for an independent Catalonia to continue using the euro. The Spanish government has ruled out any possibility of the region becoming independent, saying secession would be unconstitutional. Catalonia, whose capital is Barcelona, represents about 18 percent of Spain's economic output. Polls show Catalans overwhelmingly support the right for a secession referendum but are evenly divided over independence. Surveys show they oppose it if it means leaving the 28-nation EU. — AP

## SHOCK, OUTRAGE IN GHANA AS JUDICIAL 'BRIBERY' VIDEO AIRS

**ACCRA:** Ghanaians have voiced shock and anger after hundreds of people flocked to see a public screening of a long-awaited video capturing judges and court officials allegedly taking bribes. Twenty-two circuit judges and magistrates were suspended when the claims were first made in a newspaper earlier this month, sparking a probe by the country's judicial council disciplinary body.

Some of the judges implicated tried to block the broadcast but failed and the footage lasting several hours was finally shown on Tuesday evening in the capital, Accra. "The whole thing is pathetic," said Kwame Acheampong, who was among the audience at the screening, which it has been claimed was confirmation of long-held suspicions about the practice in Ghana. "They have abused the system and if we really want the system to work, then there must be rules and regulations that go with

such abuses," he said. Another resident, Bismarck Nanor, said any judge found guilty of wrong-doing should be punished and not be regarded as "above the law". "I think that for the justice system to purge itself, everyone found culpable must be punished according to the same law, the same legal proceedings they use against others," he added.

Michael Ntim questioned why judges would be tempted to accept bribes in the first place, adding: "I was so shocked honestly at some of the things I saw." The allegations of bribery-takes to swing favorable verdicts and acquittals were made by an undercover journalist, who then petitioned President John Dramani Mahama for the judges' removal. In addition to the 22 judges and magistrates suspended, Ghana's chief justice Georgina Wood said the judicial council was also looking at whether 12 high court judges should also face action. — AFP