

Barcode technology finally earns its stripes
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Japanese take lessons in how to throw a party
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LAURENT GILLIERON/EPA



Lake Geneva at Clarens near Montreux, at which thrill-seekers hurled themselves down slides overlooking the French Alps

Isis defeat severs Turkish route for would-be jihadists

Syria

Tom Coghlan Beirut

Islamic State has lost the last of its territory along the Turkish border, a strategic defeat that closes the route to the "caliphate" used by foreign fighters.

The loss came after Turkish tanks and special forces made an incursion into Syria in support of rebel forces.

"From Azaz to Jarabulus, our 91km border has been completely secured. All terrorist organisations have been repulsed and they have gone," Binali Yildirim, the Turkish prime minister, said last night.

It represents the fruition of Operation Euphrates Shield which, backed by the US and Turkey, began on August 24.

In yesterday's incursion 30 tanks and more than 100 Turkish special forces entered Syria near al-Rai, 34 miles to the west of Jarabulus. The Syrian rebel force attacked eastward as forces in Jarabulus advanced westward.

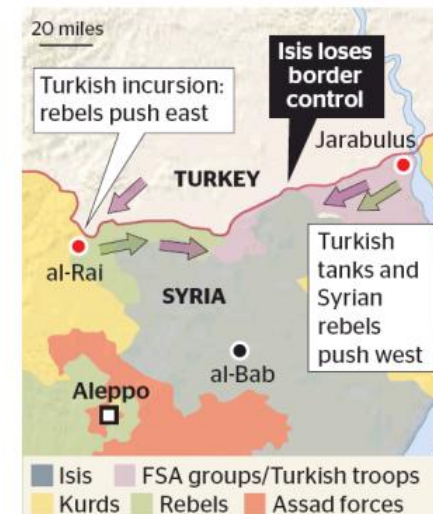
Hasan Nasser, a spokesman for the al-Mutasim Brigade of the Free Syrian Army, said that resistance from hundreds of Islamic State fighters had been fierce and that suicide car bombs had been used to try to halt the advance.

The loss of its final border access is a big strategic and symbolic blow to Isis, which has been losing territory for more than a year.

More than 500 British jihadists were among 27,000 Islamists to join Isis from at least 86 nations. Most travelled to Turkey on tourist visas and were smuggled across the border into northern Syria. Isis also used the route to smuggle arms and other supplies and dispatched terrorists to carry out attacks in Europe by the same route.

At its peak early last year, Islamic State held territory that abutted several hundred kilometres of Turkey, whose authorities appeared only intermittently committed to sealing the border.

The risky military venture to seize the border has been driven as much by a desire to halt Kurdish advances as it has been to end Isis control. Turkey is battling a long insurgency inside its



borders by PKK militants, who have close ties with the Kurdish YPG forces in Syria, which have been backed by the US in the fight against Isis.

Yesterday Turkish media reported some of the heaviest fighting since a ceasefire with the PKK collapsed last year. They said that more than 100 PKK were "neutralised" and at least 11 Turkish soldiers killed at the weekend.

In Aleppo pro-government forces launched an offensive backed by Syrian and Russian airstrikes last night, recapturing areas that they lost last month and returning to besiege rebel-held parts of the city, according to monitors and state media.

It came as the US government said it was close to securing a new Syria ceasefire deal with Russia. An announcement of a deal at the G20 summit in Hangzhou was postponed at the last minute, with lectures in place for a press conference with John Kerry, the US secretary of state, and Sergei Lavrov, his opposite number. Mr Kerry said disagreements meant that talks would resume today.

Earlier President Obama told reporters: "We're not there yet. We have grave differences with the Russians in terms of both the parties we support but also the process that is required to bring about peace in Syria."

Satirist is honoured to be barred with Bard

Italy

Tom Kingston Rome

Dario Fo, the Italian playwright and Nobel laureate, has unleashed his satirical wit on Turkey after performances of his work were cancelled there as part of a cutback on foreign culture.

Describing the censorship as an honour, Fo said it was like "winning a second Nobel prize".

As President Erdogan continues his purge of the government and the armed forces after a failed coup against him in July, the country's arts have also been struggling with new diktats.

The director-general of the country's state theatre institution has said that only plays by Turkish playwrights and only by those Turkish playwrights considered patriotic will be staged.

"We are opening our theatres with

only local plays in order to contribute to the integrity and unity of the homeland and to strengthen national and spiritual feelings," Nejat Birecik, vice-president of the State Theatres, said.

Fo said he had been told that works by him, William Shakespeare, Bertolt Brecht and Anton Chekhov that were due to be staged in Turkey had been cancelled.

"I am paradoxically happy," he said. "It is wonderful to be in the company of these great playwrights and to think that we four are the cause of all Turkey's problems."

"I am the only one of the four playwrights cancelled in Turkey who is alive. I hope they haven't realised."

The Italian satirist is a veteran of run-ins in Italy with the government and the Vatican, at which he has poked fun for decades. In 1970 he wrote his

most famous play, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, based on the fatal fall of a railway worker from the window of a Milan police station while he was being questioned about a bomb attack on a bank.

Fo, 90, continues to write and is an active supporter of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement in Italy, appearing at rallies alongside Beppe Grillo, the movement's founder.

Striking a more serious note, Fo said that the crackdown on non-Turkish playwrights was a "horrible sign", adding: "The tendency to block out whoever is not toeing the line is fascist."

The playwright said that he was also concerned about the Turkish actors who were losing their jobs because of the campaign against foreign theatre. "It is a good job we are in Italy," he added.

'Resurrected' Mugabe kills off rumours of his death

Zimbabwe

Jan Raath Harare

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, 92, disappeared from public sight without explanation for four days last week, provoking a storm of rumours that he had died or was critically ill.

Yet at Harare airport on Saturday after the presidential flight arrived, Mr Mugabe descended the steps without any apparent difficulty.

"Yes, it's true I was dead," he told journalists. "I resurrected like I always do. I don't know how many times I die. Jesus died once and resurrected only once, and poor Mugabe several times."

Speculation surged on Thursday after a newspaper report said that the

president had left midway through a two-day summit of southern African leaders in Swaziland.

Using an online flight tracker, NewsDay recorded that his aircraft had flown to Harare and on to Dubai, where it stayed for three days while gossip on social media reached fever pitch. The city, with its luxury hotels and shops, is a favourite haunt of the Mugabe family.

"He deliberately cultivates an aura of mystery where he disappears for three or four days and then suddenly appears," Eldred Masunungure, a political commentator, said. "It seems to convey a kind of invincibility. But when it finally does happen, there will be many who will not believe it until they have seen the coffin."