

International

FRIDAY, MAY 20, 2016

**Turkey names
new PM as
Erdogan
tightens grip**



**House chairman
complains about
Pentagon response
on Benghazi**



**Venezuela
opposition
pressures Maduro
after protests**



CAIRO: Families of passengers who were flying in an EgyptAir plane that vanished from radar en route from Paris to Cairo react as they wait outside a services hall at Cairo airport yesterday. — AFP

KUWAITI, 65 OTHERS PERISH AS EGYPTAIR CRASHES

EGYPTIAN PLANE CRASHES; TERRORISM SUSPECTED

KUWAIT: One Kuwaiti citizen was among 66 people who are thought to have perished yesterday morning when an EgyptAir flight crashed into the Mediterranean sea. "Authorities in France and Egypt have confirmed that Kuwaiti Abdelmohsen Mohammad Jaber Al-Mutairi was on board," Sami Al-Hamad, Kuwait Foreign Ministry Assistant for Consular Affairs said yesterday. He added that the ministry is working closely with the concerned authorities for more information.

The Paris to Cairo EgyptAir flight MS804 disappeared from radar about 10-15 miles into Egyptian airspace. Possible wreckage from the plane has been spotted off the coast of a Greek island. Terrorism has not been ruled out as a possible cause for the crash. Egypt's aviation minister said that while it was too soon to say why the Airbus A320 had vanished, "a terrorist" attack would be a more likely scenario than a technical failure, he claimed.

Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos said the plane had fallen 22,000 feet and swerved sharply twice in Egyptian airspace before it disappeared from radar screens. The incident raised fears of a repeat of the bomb-

ing of a Russian passenger plane by the Islamic State jihadist group over Egypt last October that killed all 224 people on board. A Greek military spokesman said an Egypt C-130 plane had spotted floating objects that could be debris from the crash, and ships were en route to investigate. The jet had been flying from Paris to Cairo overnight when it disappeared off radar screens, without sending a distress signal.

French President Francois Hollande confirmed that the plane had "crashed" and Paris said its accident department had opened an investigation. Cairo's state prosecutor also ordered a probe into the incident, a statement said, signaling suspicion that foul play could have caused the crash. Egypt's Aviation Minister Sherif Fathy said he could not rule out either terrorism or a technical problem. "I don't deny the hypothesis of a terrorist attack or something technical. It is too early," he told a news conference, adding that no wreckage had been found. "The possibility of having a different action onboard, of having a terror attack, it is higher than the possibility of having a technical" failure, he added.

Egypt and Greece both said they had dispatched aircraft and naval vessels on a search mission and they were expected to be joined by French teams. Fifteen French citizens were among the 26 foreign passengers on the EgyptAir flight, who also included a Briton and a Canadian. Both France and Egypt have come under attack by jihadists of the Islamic State group in the past year and Hollande promised a comprehensive investigation into the cause of the crash as suspicions swiftly focused on a bomb. "Whether it was an accident or another hypothesis that everyone has on their mind—a terrorist hypothesis... at this stage we must focus on our solidarity with the families and the search for the causes of the catastrophe," he said in a televised address.

No distress call

IS has been waging a deadly insurgency against Egyptian security forces and last October claimed the bombing of the Russian airliner flying home holidaymakers from the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheikh. France earlier called a crisis meeting of top ministers as Prime Minister Manuel Valls said "no theo-

ry can be ruled out" to explain the plane's disappearance. EgyptAir said contact was lost with the flight about 280 kilometers north of the Egyptian coast. A Greek aviation source said the flight had disappeared from Greek radar at around 0029 GMT. "It crashed around 130 nautical miles off the island of Karpathos," the source said, referring to an island northeast of Crete.

Greek civil aviation chief Constantinos Litzerakos said the pilot had mentioned no problem in the last communication before the plane disappeared, and it had not deviated from its course. "The flight controllers contacted the pilot (with the plane) at a height of 37,000 feet (near Athens)... he did not mention a problem," Litzerakos told Greece's Antenna TV. Neither the Greek coastguard nor the navy could confirm reports that a passing ship had seen "a ball of fire in the sky". The civil aviation chief said if there had been an explosion, any debris would have scattered across a wide distance. EgyptAir Holding Company vice president Ahmed Adel also said there had been "no distress call" before the plane vanished. — Agencies