

## 94 journos killed in 2010

AFP, Brussels

At least 94 journalists died in violence this year, the International Federation of Journalists said yesterday, adding that Pakistan was the most dangerous place in 2010 for media workers.

"Journalists and media personnel remain prime targets for political extremists, gangsters and terrorists," the Brussels-based organisation said in a report, adding that another three died in accidents over the past 12 months.

The death toll came at the hands of "targeted killings, bomb attacks and crossfire incidents," it said.

In 2009, the total was 139 journalists.



Fireworks erupt over the Sydney Harbour bridge during New Year in Sydney on January 1, 2011. New Year revellers around the planet welcomed 2011 in a blaze of fireworks and parties, temporarily banishing the misery of extreme weather which has struck countries across the world.

PHOTO: AFP

## W African military chiefs agree to eject Gbagbo if talks fail

France advises its citizens to leave

AFP, Paris

West African regional military chiefs have set in motion plans to use force to oust Ivory Coast strongman Laurent Gbagbo if negotiations fail, a Nigerian defence spokesman said yesterday.

"The committee of chiefs of defence staff met on Tuesday and Wednesday to put machinery in motion that if all political persuasions fail... ECOWAS will forcefully take over power from Laurent Gbagbo and hand over to Alassane Ouattara," Colonel Mohamed Yerimah told AFP.

Meanwhile, France yesterday advised its citizens in Ivory Coast, "in particular families with children," to temporarily leave the West African state because of the

political crisis there.

"Although foreign nationals are not at present threatened, the French authorities renew their advice... to all French who can, in particular families with children, to temporarily leave Ivory Coast," the foreign ministry said.

Around 14,000 French citizens live in the former French colony where Laurent Gbagbo is refusing to hand over the presidency to his rival Alassane Ouattara, who is internationally recognised as winner of presidential elections.

France has already urged its citizens to leave, but yesterday renewed the advice as UN peacekeepers stared down threats to storm a hotel where they were protecting Ouattara.

## LATEST leaks

### US long concerned by Khodorkovsky trial

CNN

Russia has hit back at criticism by western governments of the guilty verdict against former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky on embezzlement charges. But diplomatic cables obtained by the website



WikiLeaks suggest the United States has long regarded Khodorkovsky's trial as part of a broader assault on the rule of law in Russia.

Following the verdict Monday, the White House criticized what it called the application of "selective justice" in Russia, prompting the Foreign Ministry in Moscow to fire back: "Attempts to exert pressure on the court are unacceptable."

A cable from the US Embassy in Moscow from December last year published by WikiLeaks noted that prosecutors were going to great lengths "to place a 'rule of law' gloss on a politically motivated trial." But the same cable added: "Despite the case's wide implications, it continues to be a cause celebre only for foreigners and a minority of Russians."

### US frustrated with Egypt military

AP, Cairo

Egypt's military, the biggest recipient of US military aid after Israel, is in decline, according to American diplomats, who blame the Arab nation's top brass for failing to modernize and adapt to deal with new threats.

US diplomatic memos leaked this month show previously unknown friction between the two allies over military assistance and strategy. Military cooperation has always been seen as an unshakable link between Egypt and the US, even as the political side of the alliance has gone through public ups and downs over Washington's on-and-off pressure on reform and human rights.

### Nepal's peace process at crossroads

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's peace process is at a crossroads, the head of the United Nations has warned, just two weeks before the planned closure of a UN peace mission in the troubled country.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the lack of progress in the peace process that began when Nepal's bloody civil war ended more than four years ago was a "growing concern".

"Nepal's peace process is at a crossroads," Ban said in a report to the UN Security Council published in New York on Thursday.

### New Year starts in jail for Belarus opposition

AFP, Minsk

Belarus' opposition marks the New Year with hundreds of its supporters in jail and those still free subject to daily raids as the authorities show no sign of relaxing a post-election crackdown.

President Alexander Lukashenko launched the crackdown after winning a fourth term with almost 80 percent of the vote in December 19 polls, dampening opposition spirits ahead of festivities for New Year and Orthodox Christmas on January 7.

"Such a massive wave of repressions has not happened before," said Dmitry Novikov.

## Pakistan on strike against bill to amend blasphemy law

BBC ONLINE

A strike took place yesterday across Pakistan to protest against possible changes to the blasphemy laws.

The government has distanced itself from a bill to change the law, which carries a mandatory death sentence for anyone who insults Islam.

Rights groups say the law is often used to persecute religious minorities.

Traffic was thin in Karachi, and there were reports of businesses shut in parts of Sindh and Punjab provinces, says the BBC's Ilyas Khan in Islamabad.

There were also reports of a transport strike in Quetta, the capital of the southern province of Balochistan.

Religious parties have planned a series of protests against any attempt to amend the blasphemy law.

Yesterday's strike was organised to protest against a private bill submitted to parliament.

It seeks to amend the law by abolishing the death sentence and by strengthening clauses which prevent any chance of a miscarriage of justice.

Although no-one convicted under the law has been executed, more than 30 accused have been killed by lynch mobs.

The legislation returned to the spotlight in November after a Pakistani Christian woman, Asia Bibi, was sentenced to death.

## Forced evacuations as thousands flee Australian floods

AFP, Bundaberg

Australia yesterday started forced evacuations of a major town as floods which have already affected 200,000 people swamped more communities in the stricken northeast.

As Prime Minister Julia Gillard consoled evacuees, police moved the elderly and those in low-lying areas from Rockhampton, where 4,000 homes are at risk from floods paralysing a vast area the size of France and Germany combined.

"Police will order people in affected areas to leave their homes," Rockhampton mayor Brad Carter told AAP news agency.

Meanwhile military Blackhawk helicopters evacuated residents and dropped batches of food in Emerald, population 11,000, after 80 percent of the rural town was deluged by mucky waters.

Floods triggered by tropical cyclone Tasha have hit the farming and mining belt near Brisbane particularly hard, cutting road and rail links and crippling the region's all-important coal production.

As river levels continued to rise, some 22 towns were inundated or isolated, with sugar cane centre Bundaberg, known for its famous rum, divided in two by the floodwaters.

## RMG boost

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The next month Bangladesh's export volume of clothing items reached \$374 million which was higher than Indonesia's, said the commerce wing of the embassy. Indonesia in October sold products worth \$365 million to the world's largest economy.

Bangladesh exported about \$1.44 billion worth of readymade garments to the USA between July and October in 2010, posting 20.37 percent growth on the corresponding period in 2009.

In terms of growth of garment exports, Bangladesh is just behind China with 21.15 percent growth, while ahead of Vietnam with 17.26 percent, Indonesia 16.17 percent, Mexico 3.49 percent and India with 13.25 percent growth.

If the same growth trend continues, the country will overtake Vietnam in the near future, said the embassy statement, calling for concerted efforts from all stakeholders and asking them to avoid labour related problems in the RMG sector.

In the first five months of the current fiscal year, the country's overseas apparel sales grew by 36.36 percent compared with the same period last fiscal year.

Knitwear exports were up by 36.56 percent to \$3.6 billion, while exports of woven garments grew by 35.83 percent to \$2.89 billion.

The RMG sector, which employs over 30 lakh workers, mostly women, has targeted to reach \$20 billion export volume by the next three years from over \$12 billion in the last fiscal year.

## NEWS IN brief

### Suu Kyi calls for reconciliation struggle in New Year

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's champion Kyi called for country to their struggle reconciliation New Year's released yesterday.



democracy Aung San Suu citizens of her rejuvenate for national in 2011 in a message

She asked the people of Myanmar "to struggle together with new strengths, new force and new words in the auspicious new year", in the message released by her National League for

### Taliban 'shadow governor' killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kunduz

A top Taliban commander and a bodyguard were killed during an overnight operation by Afghan and NATO forces in northern Afghanistan, police said yesterday.

Mawlawi Bahadur was killed Thursday night in Chahar Dara, a militant-plagued district of Kunduz province, Haroon Aryayenezhad, a

### Italy to ban plastic bags

BBC ONLINE

A ban on plastic bags is coming into effect in Italy, which has one of the highest rates of consumption of the bags in Europe.

The ban begins in shops across Italy on 1 January, with only biodegradable, cloth or paper bags to be offered.

Environment Minister Stefania Prestigiacomo said the decree marked "a key step forward in the fight against pollution and it makes us all more responsible in terms of recycling."

## 9 firearms Credit card

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Dakat from Shankarpasha village under Abhoynagar upazila of the district.

Police in a raid arrested Kamal at the village and recovered a rifle, one shutter gun and two bullets from his house.

In another incident, a team of Rab-6 recovered four Indian pistol, three rifles and 15 bullets from Kirtipur village.

Nur Mohammad, Jessore camp in-charge of Rab-6, said acting on a tip-off the Rab team conducted a drive at the village when a gang of criminals were holding a meeting. Sensing their presence the criminal fled the village leaving the firearms and bullets on the spot.

Meanwhile, the Rab members recovered one kilogram of heroin from Khajura Bus Stand of the town.

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of those issued to the arrested -- and 15 fake seals of government and private organisations from Nur-e-Alam.

Sources said a team of the Detective Branch led by its Assistant Commissioner (AC) Asaduzzaman opted for the arrest following a complaint from Rafiqul Islam, owner of a stationery shop in Gulshan area.

According to the allegation, Nur-e-Alam had a credit card issued against Rafiqul Islam's bank account by furnishing all his [Rafiqul's] particulars, including his signature, and providing necessary documents with fake seals and authentication of the officials concerned.

AC Asaduzzaman said Nur-e-Alam used friendship as his weapon. He tried to manage bank account number and bank statements of his victims and used their signatures for the felony.

He said, "Nur-e-Alam managed to befool the banks lacking in proper verification and information sharing system."

DB filed a case against Nur-e-Alam with North Gulshan Police Station and produced him before a court yesterday seeking seven days' remand.

## Rare monk seal colony found in the Mediterranean



BBC ONLINE

Scientists have found a colony of rare Mediterranean monk seals at an "undisclosed" location in Greece.

The species is the world's most endangered seal, and one of the most endangered marine mammals - fewer than 600 individuals remain.

Researchers are keeping the location of the colony secret to avoid having the seals disturbed by human visitors.

It is the only place in the region where seals lie on open beaches, rather than hide in coastal caves.

Alexandros Karamanlidis, scientific co-ordinator of the Mom/Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk seal, explained that this

was the seals' "original behaviour".

"It is human disturbance that has caused the species to retreat to inaccessible caves," he told BBC News.

"So this place is incredibly important - the seals feel so secure that they go out on to open beaches."

The Mom researchers, whose society name is derived from the Latin name of the species, Monachus monachus, have been monitoring and studying monk seals for more than 20 years.

Dr Karamanlidis explained: "Because of human disturbance, [the seals] give birth in these coastal caves, [meaning that] more pups die during storms."