

# NEWSIN brief

## Gambia pulls out of Commonwealth

AFP, Banjul

The Gambian government announced Wednesday that the former British colony is pulling out of the Commonwealth with immediate effect, saying it would "never be a member of any neo-colonial institution".

The Commonwealth bloc is a voluntary association of more than 50 countries, many of them former territories of the British empire.

## Plane crash kills 13 at Nigeria airport

CNN ONLINE

A charter plane crashed during takeoff in Lagos, Nigeria, yesterday morning, killing at least thirteen people, the country's emergency management agency said in a post on Twitter. One survivor was found at the site.

The Associated Airlines plane was carrying 20 passengers, when it took off from Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Nigerian state-run TV broadcaster NTA reported.

## 30 killed in Indian road crash

AFP, Guwahati

A heavy goods truck careered onto the wrong side of the road and smashed head-on into two packed vehicles in the northeast of India yesterday, killing at least 30 and injuring 10, officials told AFP.

A police spokesperson said the accident took place on a highway early Thursday near the village of Doholapara in the Barpeta district of Assam, about 140 kilometres (90 miles) west of the main city of Guwahati. The driver of the truck was arrested by police shortly after the accident.

## Saudi jails, lashes 'naked' dancers

AFP, Riyadh

A Saudi court has sentenced four men to up to 10 years in prison and 2,000 lashes for dancing "naked" in public, media reported yesterday.

In a video posted on YouTube, several men appear dancing atop a vehicle. None seemed naked.

The four were charged for encouraging vice, defying norms of the society and violating public morals," according to media.



PHOTO: AFP

A Muslim man inspects the burnt area of a vandalised mosque in Thabyu Chi village near Thandwe, in Myanmar's western Rakhine state yesterday. Dozens of houses have been torched since tensions flared on September 28, as sectarian clashes left six Muslims dead and prompted international alarm.

## QATAR 'SLAVERY' ROW

# A Nepali worker tells his story

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

When the doctors peeled back the dressing on his leg, all Bhupendra Malla Thakuri could see was a bloody, infected mess. It was almost four months since the accident, but he was still trapped in Qatar with no money and little food. His employer had all but abandoned him and within a few weeks, the doctors would begin to discuss whether to amputate his leg.

"For everything I needed, there was nothing," said Bhupendra. "I was in dire straits."

Eighteen months earlier, Bhupendra, like thousands of other poor young Nepalese men, had sought out a job overseas. He borrowed money to afford a recruitment agent's fees and got a job as a truck driver in Qatar, which is going to stage 2020 world cup, with a monthly salary of 1,200 riyals (about £200).

On 9 June 2011, Bhupendra, on duty, crushed his leg. Trapped under his truck, Bhupendra lost consciousness and woke up in hospital. He stayed there for three months.

When he was discharged, he was paid the least attention. They didn't even pay his due salary. Lack of proper care his injured legs become septic.

A few months after the accident, Bhupendra's company gave him a piece of paper in English to sign. The document asked Bhupendra to agree to return to Nepal and declare he had received all his benefits. Despite his desperate situation, he refused to sign it.

By this time the debt Bhupendra owed in Nepal had risen to 350,000 rupees and he decided the only way to get compensation, or even afford the plane ticket home, was to take his case to court. After a series of tortuous legal battles, Bhupendra was eventually awarded significant compensation and he returned to Nepal on 29 July this year.

However, after all this nightmares, he wants Qatar, which has come under immense pressure for its rights violation of foreign workers, to host the world cup. Bhupendra wants change in how workers are being treated there; but scrapping the event won't achieve that, he added.



# Chem experts start Syria work

## UN Security Council calls for unhindered aid access

AFP, Damascus

Experts overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal have begun securing their work sites, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the UN said in a statement.

"Joint work with the Syrian authorities has begun on securing the sites where the team will operate," said the statement, which detailed the activities of the team's first day of work on Wednesday.

"In addition, planning continues for one of the team's immediate tasks, disabling Syria's chemical weapons production facilities, which should begin soon."

The OPCW team of 19 disarmament experts arrived in Damascus on Tuesday.

They are overseeing the implementation of a UN resolution which orders Syria's chemical arsenal destroyed.

Resolution 2118 was passed after gas

attacks on the outskirts of Damascus killed hundreds of people on August 21, an atrocity that prompted the United States to threaten military strikes on Syria.

The OPCW team faces a daunting task, as President Bashar al-Assad's regime is understood to have more than 1,000 tonnes of the nerve agent sarin, mustard gas and other banned chemical weapons.

Their immediate aim is to disable chemical weapons production sites by late October or early November using "expedient methods," including the use of explosives, sledgehammers or pouring in concrete, an OPCW official said.

It is the first time in OPCW history that such a mission is being undertaken in a country embroiled in a civil war.

The Syria conflict has killed more than 115,000 people, forced millions more to flee as refugees and trapped hundreds of thousands.

# India cabinet clears Telangana State

PTI, New Delhi/hyderabad

Overcoming resistance from Seemandhra leaders from Congress, the Indian cabinet yesterday took the first significant step towards creation of Telangana state from out of Andhra Pradesh and deciding that Hyderabad will be the joint capital of the two states for 10 years.

Over two months after the Congress Working Committee put its seal of approval, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal of the home ministry for creation of the 29th state and decided to set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) to work out modalities.

"The Cabinet has given its approval for the creation of a new state of Telangana," Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde told reporters after the meeting that lasted more than two hours.

He said it was decided that Hyderabad will be the common capital of the two bifurcated states for 10 years.

After the creation of the new state, the security and guarantees including fundamental rights of the people of coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana will be ensured, he said.

In the meeting, ministers M M Pallam Raju and K S Rao voiced their opposition to the move, sources said. They are believed to have said that bifurcation will lead to problems.

Today's decision brings to fruition the announcement made by the then home minister P Chidambaram on December 9, 2009 for creation of Telangana.

Meanwhile, India's tourism minister K Chiranjeevi yesterday resigned from his post in protest against the Union Cabinet's approval of the formation of separate Telangana, his aide said.



# Indonesian chief judge arrested for 'bribery'

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian anti-corruption investigators have arrested the constitutional court's top judge for allegedly accepting a bribe of more than \$250,000, in the country's latest high-profile graft case, an official said yesterday.

The detention of Chief Justice Akil Mochtar follows the arrest of the country's top energy regulator in August and a string of corruption cases linked to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's ruling Democratic Party.

Mochtar, 52, was detained late Wednesday at his Jakarta home as a businessman and lawmaker were allegedly about to hand him around three billion rupiah, said officials from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

"The bribery was allegedly linked to a disputed election in Gunung Mas district on Borneo island," said KPK spokesman Johan Budi.

The election was held on September 4. One of the constitutional court's main roles is to decide on electoral disputes.

The lawmaker, a member of the Golkar party of former dictator Suharto, and the businessman were also detained at Mochtar's house. The head of Gunung Mas district and another man were arrested at a Jakarta hotel soon afterwards, added Budi.

# Imran ready to go hard on Taliban, if talks fail

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Imran Khan will reluctantly support military operations against the Pakistani Taliban if in two months it is clear his highly controversial strategy of negotiating with militant groups has failed, the former cricketer has said for the first time.

The politician has been ferociously criticised in recent weeks for pressing the case for peace talks at a time when scores of civilians have been killed in bomb attacks. But speaking to the Guardian, Khan insisted the country would soon know whether his strategy would succeed.

"By the mid or end of November we will know if this isn't going to work," he said during an interview at his hilltop estate on the outskirts of the capital, Islamabad.

"It could be just a complete deadlock, a collapse, with [the Taliban] insisting on demands that we cannot meet. I reckon you will know in two months."

His critics and the senior ranks of the military have long argued the country needs to crack down on militants and launch an operation to eradicate their havens in north Waziristan, home to wide range of Islamist extremist groups.



Khan said if it became clear it was not going to work then he would reluctantly go along with an operation in north Waziristan. He said: "I am anti-war. I do not believe in military solutions. But in end if we are left with no option I will go along with it."

Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Pakistan's army chief, has pushed the government to allow the military to launch a clearing operation in north Waziristan, but Khan prefers to take the army chief's advice from three years ago.

Khan's party, the Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf, is not the largest opposition group in parliament but garnering national support for a military option would be extremely difficult in the face of noisy opposition of such a popular politician.

Khan remains convinced that the militancy ravaging Pakistan was unnecessarily inflicted on the country by the assistance former military leader General Pervez Musharraf gave to the US-led intervention in Afghanistan.

In Khan's view this sparked a tribal revolt that will only stop if the country distances itself from the US, CIA drone strikes in Fata come to an end and new rulers take over in Kabul who are "not considered a stooge government of the Americans".

# Pakistan says no to death penalty

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan has scrapped plans to reinstate the death penalty, the government said yesterday, following threats by Taliban militants to step up attacks in retaliation.

A 2008 moratorium on capital punishment imposed by Pakistan's previous government expired on June 30 and the country had been due to execute two jailed militants in August - a plan described by the Pakistani Taliban as an act of war.

Pakistan has decided to continue with the moratorium on capital punishment since the government is aware of its international commitments and is following them," Omar Hamid Khan, an interior ministry spokesman, said.

The new government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif originally said it wanted to reinstate the death penalty in a bid to crack down on criminals and Islamist militants in a move strongly criticised by international human rights groups.

Up to 8,000 people languish on death row in dozens of Pakistan's overcrowded and violent jails.

Pakistan's moratorium drew praise because of concerns its courts and police were too inept to ensure the accused a fair trial. Pakistan did, however, break its own rules in 2012 when it executed a convicted murderer and a former army serviceman.

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## ICU stay may damage brain: Study

AFP, Washington

Many people hospitalized in intensive care for conditions like a heart attack face lasting mental deficits similar to traumatic brain injury, said US researchers adding that most physicians are not aware of this phenemmon.

The problem is "very common," with a condition known as delirium affecting about three-quarters of those treated in the ICU, said the study in the New England Journal of Medicine. Previous research has shown delirium may lead to brain atrophy by causing inflammation and killing neurons, though more study is needed to understand why and how it works.

Researchers also know that delirium is more likely to occur when higher amounts of drugs such as sedatives or painkillers are given to patients.

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