

# NEWSIN brief

## UNESCO re-elects director general

AFP, Paris

UNESCO has voted its director general Irina Bokova to a second term in office, a spokeswoman for the UN agency told AFP on Friday. The Bulgarian was re-elected despite a tough challenge from two rivals -- the Djiboutian ambassador to France, Rachad Farah, and Lebanese academic Joseph Mailla.

## Indian troops kill 7 rebels in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

India's army, which says it has been locked in a nearly two-week battle with dozens of suspected Pakistan-backed rebels, said yesterday it killed seven militants in 24 hours in disputed Kashmir. The military says it has been fighting 30 to 40 rebel infiltrators who crossed the heavily militarised Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan last month.

## Foreign forces raid Shebab base: Report

AFP, Mogadishu

Foreign special forces staged a nighttime sea and air attack on a key base of Somalia's al-Qaeda-linked Shebab, the insurgents said yesterday, claiming the assault had failed. The assault comes two weeks after Shebab gunmen attacked Kenya's Westgate shopping mall, massacring 67 people in a four-day siege. Multiple nations operate special forces in the wider Horn of Africa region, and have carried out similar missions in the past.

## Malala picks up another award

AFP, London



Malala added another award to a growing list on Friday. She was given the RAW in WAR Anna Politkovskaya Award, named after the Russian investigative journalist who was shot dead seven years ago next Monday. Malala is also among the favourites for the Nobel Peace Prize, which will be announced on October 11.

## Nato strike kills 5 afghans

AFP, Jalalabad

At least five civilians, including three children, were killed overnight in a Nato airstrike in eastern Afghanistan after they went hunting for birds with air guns, local officials said Saturday. Angry locals at the scene of the strike near Jalalabad city brought out angry protests, officials said.

# Its important to read holy books

Madonna reveals her early-life struggles

AFP, Los Angeles

US pop icon Madonna was raped at knifepoint when she was a young struggling artist in New York, she revealed in an article published Friday. In a piece for Harper's Bazaar, she also revealed that she is now studying the Quran. The 55-year-old also recalled having her seedy apartment burgled three times, saying she was "scared shitless" at times before she started making it as a singer and dancer. Describing her arrival in the Big Apple from the Midwest, she wrote: "New York did not welcome me with open arms," and described "paying my rent by posing nude for art classes, staring at people staring at me naked." But she says she has learnt so many things from those experiences. "I am building schools for girls in Islamic countries and studying the Quran. I think it is important to study all the holy books. "As my friend Yaman always tells me, a good Muslim is a good Jew, and a good Jew is a good Christian, and so forth. I couldn't agree more."



Greenpeace supporters protest in Moscow yesterday in support of 30 activists jailed by Russia. Rock stars and celebrities joined a worldwide vigil yesterday in support of activists whose jailing by Russia after a protest against Arctic oil drilling sparked a new row between Moscow and the West.

PHOTO: AFP

# Khamenei backs Rohani's charm offensive at UN

AFP, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader yesterday backed President Hassan Rohani's overtures to the West but criticised some aspects of a UN visit during which he held talks with US counterpart Barack Obama. The comments were the first public response by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who wields ultimate authority in Iran, to Rohani's opening to the West in New York last week that was capped by the historic 15-minute telephone conversation with Obama. "We support the diplomatic initiative of the government and attach importance to its activities in this trip," Khamenei told military commanders and graduating cadets in remarks reported by his website, Khamenei.ir. However, he added -- without elaborating -- that "some of what happened in the New York trip was not appropriate... although we trust in our officials." The September 27 telephone conversation, the first diplomatic contact between Iranian and US presidents, broke 34 years of icy relations between Washington and Tehran since its 1979 Islamic revolution. There has been public criticism of the Rohani-Obama phone conversation from the Guards, whose commander General Mohammad Ali Jafari said on



Monday the Iranian president should have waited for US concessions before agreeing to the call. Leylazi said the opposition of hardliners to any speedy rapprochement with the West was understandable, given deep-running hostility towards the US and that "there are domestic politics in play as well." Rohani has vowed to take a more constructive approach to the talks in a bid to win relief from crippling US and European Union sanctions on Iran's oil and banking sectors. Khamenei yesterday also hit out at Washington for its alliance with Iran's number one foe, Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured a tougher line from Obama in his public comments after their White House talks last Monday, sparking Iranian accusations of "flip-flop" by the US president. Obama said Rohani's overtures would be judged on actions and not words, adding that the use of military force was still on the table. In his address to the General Assembly last Tuesday, Netanyahu warned that Israel was ready to act alone in taking military action to prevent any possibility of Iran developing a nuclear weapons capability. Khamenei said any such action would be met with a "harsh" response.

# Long political crisis will weaken US abroad

Kerry says crisis won't affect Asia pivot

AFP, Nusa Dua

US Secretary of State John Kerry warned Saturday the political standoff paralysing Washington was "reckless" and would weaken the United States' standing abroad if it did not end soon. The country's top diplomat said the bitter struggle between Republicans and Democrats that has led to a partial government shutdown was sending a message to the world that the United States could not get its "act together". Kerry insisted the United States had not yet been diminished in the eyes of leaders around the world and that a solution would be found soon, but warned of consequences if the standoff continued. "If it were prolonged, or repeated, people would begin to question the willingness of the United States to stay the course and its ability to," Kerry told reporters at a meeting of the Asia-Pacific



Economic Co-operation forum in Indonesian. Nevertheless, Kerry insisted he was convinced the standoff would not be long term, and the United States would emerge as strong as ever. Kerry also was adamant that Obama's so-called strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific had not been weakened by the president having to cancel his trip to the region. "Let me be clear, none of what is happening in Washington diminishes one iota our commitment to our partners in Asia, including our efforts for both trade and investment throughout the region," Kerry said. US President Barack Obama had been due to travel to Bali for an APEC leaders' summit starting Monday. But he had to cancel his Asian trip, which would have also taken in Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines, to deal with the first government shutdown in 17 years.

# UN presses Maldives for quick polls

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations is anxiously watching rising tensions in the Maldives and joined calls Friday for a suspended presidential election runoff to be quickly organized. UN officials are so concerned that a special briefing for the UN Security Council has been held on the Indian Ocean tourism magnet. The Maldives' supreme court called off a presidential runoff vote scheduled for last weekend between former president Mohamed Nasheed and Abdulla Yameen, a half brother of former strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. There have been almost daily demonstrations since. UN leader Ban Ki-moon has released several statements calling for calm and for Maldivians to "renew their commitment to the constitution and rule of law, and work towards creating enabling conditions for peaceful, credible run-off elections to take place as soon as possible," Nesirky stressed. UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, who has acted as a UN envoy to the Maldives, briefed the Security Council on Wednesday. The UN official warned the 15-nation council that there was "a potential for trouble" and that recent democratic gains are "under threat," said a diplomat who was at the meeting.



Fishermen throw a bunch of flowers in the sea near the Lampedusa harbour yesterday after a boat with migrants sank killing more than a hundred of people. Inset, people of Lampedusa hold a vigil in the memory of the victims.

PHOTO: AFP

# 2m monitoring web in China

AFP, Beijing

China is employing two million people to keep tabs on people's Internet use, according to state media, in a rare glimpse into the secret world of Beijing's vast online surveillance operation. Many of the employees are simply performing keyword searches to monitor the tens of millions of messages being posted daily on popular social media and microblogging sites, the Beijing News said. The exact number of people employed to trawl through the Internet in a bid to prevent social unrest and limit criticism of the ruling Community party has long been the subject of speculation. The "web police" are employed by the government's propaganda arm, as well as by commercial sites, the Beijing News said. It said that despite their large number, the monitors are not always able to prevent comments that are deemed by the government to be undesirable from being published and reposted. China's censorship authorities tightly control online content for fear of political or social unrest that could challenge the Communist party's grip on power. In recent months authorities have ramped up already strict censoring of domestic social media sites. China has more than 500 million Internet users, making it the world's largest online population.

# Pinochet a 'dictator' not 'military ruler'

Rights group urges change in textbooks

AFP, Santiago

A Chilean education advisory group recommended Friday that schools use "dictatorship" rather than "military regime" in textbooks to describe General Augusto Pinochet's rule marred by rights abuses. The decision by the National Education Council represents a shift over how Chile brands the 1973-1990 era that saw Pinochet brutally crack down on anything that smacked of leftist dissent, leaving more than 3,200 people dead and arresting some 38,000. "In this case, since time has passed, let's get straight to the point and use the word 'dictatorship,'" council president Ignacio Irarrazaval told Radio Bio Bio. The measure, which the council proposed to the Education Ministry, would be applied to school textbooks for children 12-16 years old. In 2012, the council had approved using both the words "regime" and "dictatorship" interchangeably to describe the Pinochet government in textbooks for children aged six to 12. Pinochet seized power in a military coup in September 1973, ousting socialist president Salvador Allende. In Chile, his supporters and detractors refer to the Pinochet era differently. Opponents speak of the Pinochet "dictatorship," while supporters talk about the "military regime" and "military coup."



# Man blames Indian PM in suicide note

TNN, Bangalore

A 32-year-old salesman Santosh Gowda with a shoe company committed suicide, citing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's alleged "bad administration" and failure to repel attacks by Pakistan as the cause. A Pre-University course dropout, Santosh had moved to Bangalore 12 years ago and worked as a salesman with various companies before joining a footwear major four years ago. Santosh, a bachelor, was upset that he couldn't be a success in life. He was also addicted to alcohol and gambling, his colleagues told police. Police recovered a three-page suicide note in Kannada from the room. In the first two pages, Santosh lamented his inability to earn enough to buy assets and come to terms with life in Bangalore. The last page was devoted to the political situation in the country. He charged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with "failure in giving good administration". Colleagues told police he was also depressed over his failure to take care of his parents in their old age. The body was shifted to MS Ramaiah Hospital for the autopsy and handed over to his family on Friday.

# Egypt braces for demos after clashes

AFP, Cairo

Supporters and opponents of deposed Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi yesterday called for rival demonstrations on the 1973 Arab-Israeli war anniversary after the deadliest violence in weeks. The Anti-Coup Alliance of Islamist groups called on its supporters to try to reach Cairo's Tahrir Square, blocked off by the army, to mark today's 40th anniversary of the war. The conflict, known as the October war in the Arab world and the Yom Kippur war in Israel, is remembered proudly by the Egyptian army as it caught Israel's defences unawares and led ultimately to Egypt's recovery of the Sinai Peninsula in the 1979 peace treaty. "The Egypt Anti-Coup Alliance repeats its call to all Egyptians to continue their protests in every part of Egypt, and to gather in Tahrir Square on Sunday, October 6, to celebrate the army of that victory and its leaders," the bloc said. Attempts on Friday by Islamist protesters against the army's July 3 overthrow of Morsi to reach Tahrir Square sparked clashes with security forces who responded with tear gas and warning shots. Four people were killed in Cairo's deadliest protest violence in more than a month as demonstrators clashed with coup supporters as well as security forces. Clashes were also reported Friday in Alexandria and the Upper Egypt province of Assiut. The Egyptian press blamed the Brotherhood for the violence and expressed concern that today's demonstrations would see more. The UN, the US and Germany voiced alarm at Friday's violence.

# ODDLY enough

## Don't go to bed angry, pope tells couples

AFP, Assisi

Pope Francis on Friday advised married couples not to go to bed angry "even if the plates fly" in a light-hearted address during a pilgrimage to the sites associated with St Francis of Assisi. "Argue as much as you like, even if the plates fly that is fine, but never end the day without making peace," the pope said in Assisi Cathedral. "If married couples learn to say sorry, that is peace... It is a nice secret and that is life, rather than painful separations," he said. Married couples who separate "have not managed to forgive each other in time," the pope said. Morocco teens held for kissing photo on FB BBC ONLINE A Moroccan teenage boy and girl have been arrested for posting an online photograph of themselves kissing. The couple - aged 14 and 15 - had their picture taken by a friend outside their school in the north-eastern town of Nador and posted it on Facebook. They were held for violating public decency after a local newspaper printed the photo. The couple are due appear before a juvenile court next week. A campaign to post a million copycat photos was later launched in protest.