

NEWSIN  
brief

Guatemala genocide  
trial rescheduled  
for 2015

AFP, Guatemala City

The genocide trial of Guatemala's former dictator Efraim Rios Montt has been scheduled to resume January 5, 2015, authorities said due to crammed schedule of the court. Rios Montt, now 87, went on trial in March on charges of ordering the massacre of indigenous Ixil Maya people in the 1980s as part of a scorched-earth policy in the most brutal chapter of a 36-year civil war that ended in 1996. He was convicted on May 10, 2013 of genocide and war crimes in a historic ruling

Lieberman acquitted  
on graft charges

AFP, Jerusalem

An Israeli court yesterday acquitted Avigdor Lieberman on corruption charges in a move welcomed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who hailed his anticipated return to government as foreign minister.

The verdict, reached by a panel of three judges at Jerusalem Magistrates Court, means the outspoken hardliner is free to return to a commanding position within the coalition - in a move which could have implications for Israel's peace talks with the

Greek protests  
against IMF, EU

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

In scenes not witnessed since the beginning of Greece's economic crisis, auditors from the European Union and International Monetary Fund came face-to-face with the full force of anti-austerity anger as protesters in Athens jeered, heckled and stopped them from leaving the finance ministry.

Held back by riot police brought in to guard the department, furious demonstrators screamed "take your bailout and get out of here" as the officials left a first round of talks with the finance minister, Yannis

Thaksin denies  
amnesty for him

AFP, Bangkok

Fugitive former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra yesterday denied that a controversial amnesty bill pushed by his allies was for his personal benefit, accusing political opponents of "distortions and lies".

There have been daily protests in Bangkok since the politically charged legislation was approved by the lower house last week, raising fears among Thaksin's foes that he could return from self-

Settlements  
illegal: Kerry

Middle East peace hope  
falters as Israel, Palestine  
dig in over settlement  
issue; US unveils 75m  
in aid to Palestine

AFP, Bethlehem

Secretary of State John Kerry reaffirmed US opposition to Israeli settlements yesterday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the Palestinians of creating "artificial crises" over the issue.

Kerry arrived in the region late on Tuesday in a bid to keep fragile peace talks on track as recriminations grew following three months of negotiations that appear to have made little progress in resolving the decades-old conflict.

His first meeting of the day was with Netanyahu, who denounced the Palestinians for threatening to quit the talks over Israel's continued settlement construction on land they want for their future state.

The Israeli leader told Kerry, who is on his seventh visit to the region in 10 months, he was "concerned about the progress" of the talks, accusing the Palestinians of fabricating reasons to avoid making tough decisions.

"I see the Palestinians... continuing to create artificial crises, continuing to avoid, run away from the historic decisions that are needed to make a genuine peace," Netanyahu said. "I hope your visit will help steer them back to a place where we could achieve the historical peace that we seek."

After nearly three hours of talks with Netanyahu, Kerry drove to the West Bank city of Bethlehem where he sought to play down the dispute.

"As in any negotiations, there will be moments of up and moments of down. It goes back and forth," he told the crowds gathered outside the Church of the Nativity, the traditional site of Jesus's birth.

But following more than two hours of talks with the Palestinians, including 40 minutes one-to-one with presi-



dent Mahmud Abbas, he was quick to reiterate US opposition to the settlements.

"We consider now, and have always considered, the settlements to be illegitimate," Kerry said.

"I want to make it extremely clear that at no time did the Palestinians in any way agree, as a matter of going back to the talks, that they could somehow condone or accept the settlements," he added.

His remarks related to a bitter row that has erupted over Israeli moves during the past week to push ahead with construction of more than 3,700 new settler homes.

Talks between the two negotiating teams which took place on Tuesday broke down over the issue, a senior Palestinian official told AFP.

Several Israeli officials have claimed the settlement announcements were in keeping with tacit "understandings" between the two sides linked to the release last week of 26 veteran Palestinian prisoners.

Their comments sparked furious denials from the Palestinians.

"Israel claims there's a deal to continue settlement building in exchange for releasing the last batch of prisoners, but this is not true at all," the Palestinian official said.

Israel denies its construction is a violation of the terms which brought the two sides back to the table.

During his stopover in Bethlehem, Kerry unveiled \$75 million (56 million euros) in new US aid for Palestinian infrastructure projects in the West Bank.

"We need to develop the economies to show both peoples that peace has the benefits of economic opportunity and prosperity and a better quality of life," he said, saying that Bethlehem was a key example of the "untapped potential" of the Palestinian economy.

Brotherhood  
ban upheld  
in Egypt

REUTERS, Cairo

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood yesterday failed in an attempt to overturn a court ruling banning it, the state news agency said, another blow to the debilitated Islamist movement.

A court in September had outlawed the Brotherhood after the army overthrew President Mohamed Morsi in July following mass protests against his rule.

The case against his Brotherhood was brought by a lawyer from the leftist Tagammu party, which cited the need to protect Egyptians from violence.

Defence lawyer Faisal el-Sayyed, a Brotherhood member, said he would appeal the ruling.

Since Morsi's overthrow, state media has lionised the military and police for the crackdown and his supporters frequently protest in the streets.

The military-installed government has promised new elections next year which foreign governments say must include all political factions to mark a credible return to democracy.

The court ruling indicated the Brotherhood was likely to be excluded.

Greenhouse gas  
hits new record

AFP, Geneva

The amount of greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere hit a new record high in 2012, continuing an ever-faster rise that is driving climate change, the UN weather agency said yesterday.

"The concentrations are reaching once again record levels," Michel Jarraud, who heads the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), told reporters in Geneva.

His organisation released its annual report on greenhouse gases ydesay, showing that concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO2), methane and nitrous oxide all broke fresh records in 2012.

Global concentrations of CO2, the main culprit in global warming, for instance reached 393.1 parts per million last year, or 141 percent of pre-industrial levels -- defined as before 1750.

This level has not existed on Earth in three to five million years, experts say.

The report was released a day after the UN Environment Programme warned the chances of limiting the global temperature rise to two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels were swiftly diminishing, and ahead of UN climate talks that open in Warsaw next week.

The UN's two-degree target is being chased through efforts to curb Earth-warming greenhouse gas emissions, mainly caused by fossil-fuel burning to power industry, transport and farming.

Experts warn that unless more is done to rein in emissions, the world faces potentially devastating effects such as more frequent megastorms, species extinctions, water shortages, crop die-offs, loss of land to the rising seas as glaciers and polar ice melt, and spreading disease.



'Syria may be hiding  
chemical stockpile'

AFP, United Nations

The United States is skeptical about Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons to an international watchdog and is still checking its accuracy, a top US envoy said Tuesday.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad agreed to destroy all his banned chemical arms by mid-2014 as part of a Russia-US deal that headed off the threat of a US military strike.

US officials said Washington is concerned that the Assad government could try to retain some of its stockpiles. "There are some indications that certain elements of the Syrian regime want to preserve their chemical weapons stockpiles," one such official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

Samantha Power, Washington's envoy to the United Nations, said experience dealing with Assad has led to US "skepticism."

Other Western envoys say their countries also have strong doubts about a 700-page declaration of Syria's chemical weapons sites and arms made to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Damascus has also met a deadline to destroy its chemical and weapons production facilities and been praised for its cooperation by international inspectors.

Arafat was poisoned: Report

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The first forensic tests on remains from the exhumed corpse of Yasser Arafat have shown unexpectedly high levels of radioactive polonium-210, suggesting the Palestinian leader could have been poisoned with the rare and lethal substance.

The Swiss scientists who tested Arafat's remains after the exhumation of his body in November discovered levels of polonium at least 18 times higher than the norm in Arafat's ribs, pelvis and in soil that absorbed his leaked bodily fluids.

The Swiss forensic report was handed to representatives of Arafat's widow, Suha Arafat, as well as representatives of the Palestinian Authority on Tuesday. A copy of the report was obtained exclusively by the al-Jazeera TV network, which shared it with the Guardian prior to publication.

The Swiss report said that even taking into account the eight years since Arafat's death and the quality of specimens taken from bone fragments



and tissue scraped from his decayed corpse and shroud, the results "moderately support the proposition that the death was the consequence of poisoning with polonium-210".

Suha Arafat said the evidence in the report suggested that her then healthy 75-year-old husband, who died in 2004 four weeks after he first fell ill shortly after eating dinner, was almost certainly murdered by poisoning.

She told al-Jazeera: "This is the crime of the century." Speaking to the Guardian after receiving the report, Suha Arafat said she would press for answers on who was responsible.

David Barclay, a British forensic scientist who had studied the report, told al-Jazeera: "The report contains strong evidence, in my view conclusive evidence, that there's at least 18 times the level of polonium in Arafat's exhumed body than there should be."

Arafat died in hospital in France on November 11 2004 at the age of 75, but doctors were unable to



Greenpeace activists hold flags reading "Free the Arctic 30" as they go past the Kremlin by boat to protest the detention of the "Arctic 30", a group of Greenpeace activists, on November 6, 2013, in Moscow. An international maritime court yesterday began hearing a Dutch complaint over Russia's weeks-long detention of a Greenpeace protest ship and its 30 crew members, proceedings which Moscow is boycotting.

PHOTO:  
AFP

Maldives candidates  
agree to Nov 9 vote

BBC ONLINE

The Maldives' three presidential candidates have agreed to take part in elections on Saturday as planned, the president's office has told the BBC.

Media Secretary Masood Imad said they were doing all they could to prevent the country "falling into limbo".

It will be the third attempt at holding polls, after the first round was annulled and a rerun stopped by police.

The opposition have accused the government of trying to prevent their candidate from winning.

The Maldives has been in turmoil since ex-President Mohamed Nasheed was ousted in disputed circumstances in 2012.

Nasheed, who led the first round with 45% of the vote, has been fighting for the elections to be held.

However, the other two remaining candidates, Gasim Ibrahim and Abdullah Yameen, have yet to sign updated voter lists, a requirement imposed by the Supreme Court.

Imad said they had now agreed to do so, paving the way for Saturday's election to go ahead.

SPYING CLAIMS

Germany calls  
in UK envoy

BBC ONLINE

The British ambassador in Berlin was called in to Germany's foreign ministry on Tuesday to respond to spying allegations following a media report that London has been operating a secret listening post from its embassy in Berlin.

The UK's Independent newspaper says the British embassy in Berlin may house a "top-secret listening post".

It cites leaked US National Security Agency (NSA) documents suggesting the UK could be using hi-tech equipment housed on the embassy roof.

Equipment within the unit "would be capable of intercepting mobile phone calls, wi-fi data and long-distance communications across the German capital," the Independent reported.

Any such activity would be against international law, Berlin says.

Argentina dictatorship  
files reveal 'blacklists'

CNN ONLINE

Hundreds of secret files from the Argentinean dictatorship have been uncovered, including "blacklists" that singled out more than 300 artists, actors and writers.

Among those the military junta deemed "dangerous": novelist Julio Cortazar, singer Mercedes Sosa and actress Norma Aleandro. These three, for example, spent the dictatorship years abroad: Sosa and Aleandro in exile and Cortazar in France.

These cultural figures were categorized as "F1" to "F4," corresponding to their perceived risk to the state, Defense Minister Agustin Rossi said Monday when he unveiled the findings. Those labeled F1 were considered low-risk, and F4s were those seen as most dangerous to the dictatorship.

The works of these artists were banned or censored during the dictatorship, from 1976 to 1983.

Up to 30,000 students, labor leaders, intellectuals and leftists who ran afoul of the dictatorship because of their political views disappeared or were held in secret jails and torture centers during the so-called Dirty War.

The documents -- 1,500 in total -- are all from the secret files of the military junta, Rossi said.

The files were found in the basement of the building that houses the air force headquarters, Rossi said, according to the state-run Telam news agency.

The files have "historical and judicial" value, Rossi told a radio station Tuesday.

"Thirty years since the return to democracy, there may still exist documentation that can be useful" to reconstruct details from the dictatorship, he said.

US STATE POLLS

Democrats take NY, Virginia as  
Republicans win New Jersey

AFP, New York

Democrats retook Republican strongholds in New York's city hall and the Virginia governor's mansion Tuesday,

while a Republican with potential presidential hopes won reelection easily in New Jersey.

Tuesday's vote was the first major round of balloting in the United States since President Barack Obama won a second term in the White House last year. Some races were seen as litmus tests for future national voting.

In the nation's largest city New York, old-style progressive Bill de Blasio became its first Democratic mayor in a generation, specifically since 1989, even though New York is overall largely Democrat.

Another key race, for the governorship of the southern state of Virginia, turned out to be a nail-biter, but in the end Democrat Terry McAuliffe won in the otherwise strongly Republican state bordering the nation's capital.

New Jersey's Republican Governor Chris Christie handily defeated his Democrat challenger, earning a second four-year term in a race some pundits said would serve as a



Blasio



Christie



McAuliffe

platform for a future presidential bid.

Christie is a straight-talking moderate Republican who won much praise for his handling of the

devastation wrought on his state last year by Superstorm Sandy.

He is increasingly seen as a contender for the Republican nomination for the White House in 2016 given his pragmatism, charisma and ability to command cross-party support.

Obama called De Blasio, McCauliffe and Boston mayor-elect Martin Walsh to congratulate them.

Mayoral elections were also held Tuesday in the rustbelt city of Detroit, which recently declared bankruptcy. Democrat Mike Duggan won, though his job holds little power as the city is now run by a state-appointed emergency administrator.

In Boston, traumatized by the Boston Marathon bombings in April, Democrat Walsh replaced outgoing Mayor Thomas Menino.

Out in Colorado in the west, six of 11 counties voted to ask authorities to explore the idea of

Kamala: Marvel's Muslim  
girl superhero

THE NEW YORK TIMES

With most superheroes, when you take away the colorful costume, mask and cape, what you find underneath is a white man. But not always. In February, as part of a continuing effort to diversify its offerings, Marvel Comics will begin a series whose lead character, Kamala Khan, is a teenage Muslim girl living in Jersey City.

Kamala, whose family is from Pakistan, will face struggles outside her own head, including conflicts close to home. "Her brother is extremely conservative," Amanat, an editor at Marvel Comics, said. "Her mom is paranoid that she's going to touch a boy and get pregnant. Her father wants her to concentrate on her studies and become a doctor." Next to those challenges, fighting supervillains may be a respite.

Wilson, another editor, said the series was "about the universal experience of all American teenagers, feeling kind of isolated and finding what they are." Though here, she adds, that happens "through the

