

# NEWS IN brief

## Desmond Tutu's home burgled in S Africa

AFP, Cape Town  
Burglars broke into the Cape Town home of South African peace icon Desmond Tutu when he was away speaking at Nelson Mandela's memorial, an aide said yesterday.

The timing of the incident is embarrassing for South Africa. It earlier emerged that the sign language interpreter at Mandela's memorial had

## Pak court bans airing of foreign films

PTI, Lahore  
A Pakistani court has stopped the screening of foreign films, serials and television shows, especially Indian content, on the country's TV channels, triggering panic and outrage among exhibitors and viewers.

Despite the court's order, none of the Pakistani channels have stopped screening foreign content, including Indian and Turkish

## Police strike: 7 killed amid Argentina looting

AFP, Buenos Aires  
Seven people died in overnight looting in northern Argentina sparked by a police strike, bringing the toll to nine since the job action began a week ago, authorities said Tuesday.

Riots and looting first erupted in the city of Cordoba a week ago, after police demanding higher wages and better working conditions refused to go on patrol there. So far, the strikes have spread to about

## Tejpal remanded to 12-day judicial custody

PTI, Panaji  
A Goa court yesterday remanded Tehelka magazine founder-editor Tarun Tejpal to 12-day judicial custody in the case of alleged sexual assault of a junior woman colleague. He was previously under a 10-day police custody which expired yesterday. Tejpal was arrested by Goa Police on

## Myanmar frees 44 political prisoners

AFP, Yangon  
Myanmar yesterday freed 44 political detainees, a presidential adviser said, the latest in a series of prisoner amnesties by the country's reformist regime. President Thein Sein has pledged to release all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar by

## New greenhouse gas discovered

AFP, Montreal  
Scientists in Canada on Tuesday announced the discovery of a greenhouse gas with unprecedented potential to warm the Earth, and said the chemical has been lurking in the atmosphere for decades.  
The substance -- perfluorotributylamine (PFTBA) -- "is the most radiatively efficient chemical found to date, breaking all other chemical records for its potential to impact climate,"



# Mandela lies in state

1. People watch the funeral cortege of Nelson Mandela driving through the streets in Pretoria, yesterday. 2. Officers carry Mandela's coffin to the Union Buildings. 3. South African former apartheid-era president FW de Klerk (L) bids farewell to Mandela. 4. Bono (C) and his wife, Alison Hewson (L) and Mandela's former assistant, Zilda le Grange (R) leave after seeing the coffin. 5. Throngs queue outside Union Buildings in Pretoria to bid farewell to Mandela's body lying in state.

PHOTO: AFP

# Gulf hails Iran's policy shift

Urges foreign forces to quit Syria, backs Geneva meet

AFP, Kuwait City

Gulf Arab leaders meeting in Kuwait yesterday called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from war-ravaged Syria, and praised Iran's new government for its shift in policy.

The leaders of the six Gulf monarchies also approved the formation of a joint military command, but postponed a decision on a proposed union apparently over differences.

The declaration came at the end of a two-day summit in Kuwait City of the Gulf Cooperation Council led by Sunni-ruled heavyweight Saudi Arabia, the longtime regional arch foe of Shia-dominated Iran.

The monarchies "welcome the new orientation by the Iranian leadership towards the Gulf Cooperation Council and hope it will be followed by concrete measures that would positively impact regional peace," the statement said.

They also "welcome the interim deal signed by the P5+1 and Iran as a first step toward an inclusive and lasting agreement on Iran's nuclear programme that would end international and regional concerns."

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

last week tried to assure Gulf states the nuclear deal was not at their expense and called for a new page in relations as he toured four GCC countries, but not Saudi Arabia or Bahrain.

Adopting a firm position on Syria, the GCC "strongly condemned the continued genocide that al-Assad's regime is committing against the Syrian people using heavy and chemical weapons."

It called "for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Syria," in a clear reference to Iran-backed Shiite militias from Iraq and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement which are supporting Assad's troops against Sunni-led rebels.

The GCC backed the rebels' position that Assad play no role in any political transition agreed to in talks scheduled for next month in Geneva, while urging the opposition to attend the meeting.

The National Coalition, an umbrella opposition group also backed by the West, had agreed to attend next month's Geneva 2 peace conference under certain conditions, the exclusion of Assad from any transitional government.

The GCC states -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- formed the Peninsula Shield force in 1982 as a 5,000-strong force

# US suspends all non-lethal aid

AFP, Ankara

The United States has suspended all non-lethal assistance into northern Syria after Islamist rebel forces seized armed depots belonging to the opposition Free Syrian Army, a US embassy spokesman said yesterday.

"Because of the current situation the United States has suspended deliveries of non-lethal assistance into northern Syria," spokesman TJ Grubisha told AFP.

But he added that the US move would not impact on humanitarian assistance which was coordinated by international and nongovernmental organisations.

The Islamic Front, the largest Islamist rebel force in Syria, seized the depots belonging to the Western-backed FSA near the Bab el-Hawa border crossing with Turkey on Saturday.

The Islamic Front was formed last month when six groups merged and pledged to work towards forming an Islamic state.



# Obama selfie draws ire

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

It was all going so well after that historic handshake with Raul Castro. But President Obama managed to put himself back in the firing line after posing for a rather inappropriate selfie with Prime Minister David Cameron and the Danish leader Helle Thorning-Schmidt at a memorial held for Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg on Tuesday.

Michelle Obama was captured on camera looking unamused by her husband's playful pursuits as he snapped away on his mobile phone during the sombre service. The photograph quickly went viral on the internet, sparking widespread outrage on social media.

"What selfish morons take a 'selfie' at a memorial service? Oh yeah that's right, Barack Obama and



Anti-govt protesters clash with anti-riot police on Independence Square in Kiev yesterday. Ukrainian security forces pulled out of the epicentre of mass protests in Kiev yesterday after a nine hour standoff with thousands of demonstrators, in a major boost for the opposition to President Viktor Yanukovich. Inset, US Assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland (R) was seen distributing cakes to riot policemen on the Independence Square in Kiev on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Spectre of lynching haunts Central Africa

AFP, Bangui

The father of a slain French soldier has described how disarmed Muslim fighters in the Central African Republic were lynched by a Christian mob in harrowing testimony that raised the spectre of a new wave of sectarian killing in the troubled state.

Defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian yesterday admitted that France's mission to pacify its former colony represented a much more difficult operation than the military intervention against Islamist rebels in Mali earlier this year.

And those remarks were borne out by Philippe Vokaer's account of his final contact with his 23-year-old son Nicolas, one of two French paratroopers killed in a firefight while on a night patrol in the capital Bangui on Monday.

"We had a text exchange the same evening," Vokaer senior told French daily Le Parisien. "He had witnessed some atrocious scenes. As soon as the French soldiers disarmed the Muslim militia, they saw them being lynched by a Christian mob in the middle of the street. There was nothing the army could do to stop it."

French President Francois Hollande made a brief visit to Bangui on Tuesday evening. After paying tribute to the memory of Vokaer and his fallen comrade, Antoine Le Quinio, 22, Hollande defended the military intervention as the only alternative to "carnage."

In Bangui, a humanitarian aid worker who did not want to be identified, told AFP he feared mass reprisals against members of the country's Muslim minority, who are associated with the Seleka coalition behind the March coup which plunged the CAR into anarchic terror.

# CRISIS IN THAILAND

## 'Red Shirts' vow poll support

AFP, Bangkok

Thai government supporters yesterday threw their backing behind upcoming elections in the protest-hit nation, warning that proposals from opposition rallies aimed at suspending the country's democracy risked "absolute dictatorship".

Bangkok has been shaken by more than a month of mass opposition demonstrations aimed at ousting Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and ridding the kingdom of the influence of her older brother, deposed former leader Thaksin.

On Monday, Yingluck called an early election -- set for February 2 -- to try to calm the political turmoil. But opposition leader Suthep Thaugsuban rejected the move, demanding the government step aside in favour of an unelected "people's council".

The Red Shirt protest movement, which is largely loyal to Thaksin, urged people to take part in the vote, regardless of which party they support.

"If you choose Suthep's side, you choose absolute dictatorship," Red Shirt leader Nattawut Saikuea said at a press conference yesterday.

"If you don't accept what Suthep does you must cast a vote -- this is not a mission for the Red Shirts alone, but the entire Thai people," he said.

Thailand has seen several bouts of political turmoil since Thaksin was ousted in a military coup in 2006, with rival protests spilling into the streets in sometimes bloody unrest.

The political conflict broadly pits a Bangkok-based middle class and royalist elite backed by the military against rural and working-class voters loyal to Thaksin.

# Uruguay lawmakers legalise marijuana

AFP, Montevideo

Uruguay has approved pioneering legislation legalising marijuana, becoming the first nation in the world to oversee the production and sale of the drug.

After a 12-hour debate, 16 leftist senators out of 29 lawmakers voted Tuesday in favor of the legislation championed by President Jose Mujica, who must now sign it into law.

The bill goes well beyond the marijuana legalisation measures recently approved by the US states of Colorado and Washington, or the similarly liberal laws of the Netherlands and Spain.

Consumers over 18 will be able to grow their own marijuana, though no more than six plants per person. They can also get it through clubs or buy up to 40 grams per month from pharmacies.

In every case, they must be registered with the government.

# India reinstates ban on gays

AFP, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday reinstated a colonial-era ban on gay sex that enables the jailing of homosexuals in a major setback for rights campaigners in the world's biggest democracy.

A two-judge bench struck down a landmark Delhi High Court ruling in 2009 which found that section 377 of the Indian penal code prohibiting "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" infringed the fundamental rights of Indians.

The decision four years ago to decriminalise gay sex emboldened the still largely closeted homosexual community which has since campaigned publicly against widespread discrimination and ignorance.

But the Supreme Court bench, headed by GS Singhvi on his last day before retirement, found the High Court had overstepped its authority and that a law passed by the British

in 1860 was still constitutionally valid.

"It is up to parliament to legislate on this issue," Singhvi said in the judgement which crushed the hopes of activists who had fought the case and led to tears outside the court in central New Delhi.

The 2009 ruling was strongly opposed by religious groups, particularly leaders of India's Muslim and Christian communities, who appealed to the Supreme Court and were delighted with yesterday's outcome.

India's law minister promised to review the ruling, but a new gay rights law that would have limited public support is unlikely to pass the dysfunctional national parliament before general elections next year.

Amnesty International called the decision a "body blow to people's rights to equality, privacy and dignity", while a legal challenge from gay rights groups is also possible.