



ROHINGYA DISCRIMINATION Report says it is state policy

AP, Yangon

A report released yesterday alleges that the Myanmar government has in place official policies that deny Rohingya Muslims the same rights as others in the country, including population control measures and restrictions on their movements.

Released by Fortify Rights, a Southeast Asia-based human rights organisation, the report also highlights other discriminatory policies applied to the Rohingya, including restrictions on marriage, childbirth and construction of places of worship.

Matthew Smith, executive director of Fortify Rights, said analysis of a dozen leaked official and public records detail restrictions on the right to travel freely, practice religion, repair homes, marry and to have families — the only place in the Buddhist nation of 60 million that has limited parents to two children.

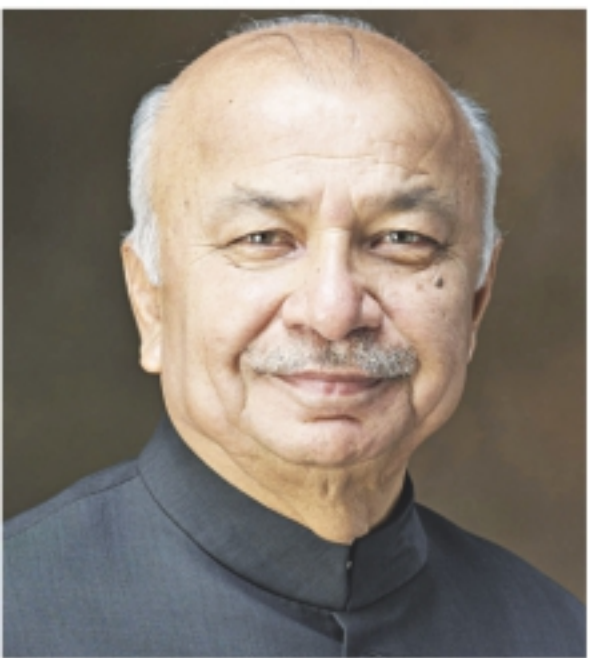
While these policies have long been known, in some cases dating back decades, this is the first time the orders have been made public, he said, describing the chilling effect of seeing them in writing.

"It represents a level of planning and knowledge among Myanmar authorities that raises the abuses to the threshold of crimes against humanity," said Smith. "These abuses have been carried out for years with complete impunity, driving the population into the ground."

There was no immediate reaction from the government. The group said, to the best of its knowledge, almost all the policies are still in place and enforced.

Myanmar, which only recently emerged from a half-century of brutal military rule, has been hit by sectarian violence since it began its bumpy transition to democracy in 2011. As many as 280 people have been killed, most of them Rohingya attacked by Buddhist mobs, and another 140,000 forced to flee their homes.

Confidential documents published in the 79-page report reveal that official orders issued by Rakhine state authorities from 1993 to 2008 outline consistent state policies restricting Rohingya.



Indian HM threatens to 'stamp out' media critics

AFP, New Delhi

India's home minister has threatened to "stamp out" journalists who have been "trouble mongering" ahead of national polls due by May, underlining pressures on the media during a bitter election campaign.

The comments by Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde, criticised by social media and opposition parties, came after a former army chief referred to reporters recently as "presstitutes."

Speaking on Monday, Shinde accused the media of "stirring up trouble" and manipulating news about his Congress party at a rally in the western state of Maharashtra.

"The intelligence wing is under me, so I know from where such activities are launched and I watch them ... Now we have decided to stamp out such trouble mongering mentalities from this country," Shinde said.

The Editors Guild of India on Monday objected to what it called "unsubstantiated charges" against the media, including by anti-corruption campaigner Arvind Kejriwal who has alleged a nexus between media organisations and Indian companies.

Shinde attempted to clarify his comments yesterday, saying he was referring to social media and the spreading of rumours.

"It was not on journalists," Shinde was quoted as saying by news channel CNN-IBN.

New Egypt PM named after shock resignation

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's military-installed authorities named a former member of ousted strongman Hosni Mubarak's ruling party as prime minister yesterday ahead of a presidential election expected to bring the army chief to power.

Ibrahim Mahlab, a former state-sector construction boss, vowed to fight "terrorism" and bring back tourists as he began work on forming a new cabinet after the surprise resignation on Monday of prime minister Hazem al-Beblawi.

Beblawi's government had been installed in July after the military ousted Islamist Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected president and its first civilian one. But it resigned in the face of mounting criticism of its failure to get to grips with a floundering economy and worsening industrial unrest.

Mahlab said that interim president Adly Mansour had tasked him with forming a new government "in three to four days" and promised to work hard to improve services for Egyptians and fight "terrorism."

"This will create the conditions for investment



Ibrahim Mahlab

and the return of tourism," he said.

Since Morsi's overthrow, Islamist militants have killed several foreign tourists as well as scores of security personnel in attacks that have severely dented the economically vital tourism sector.

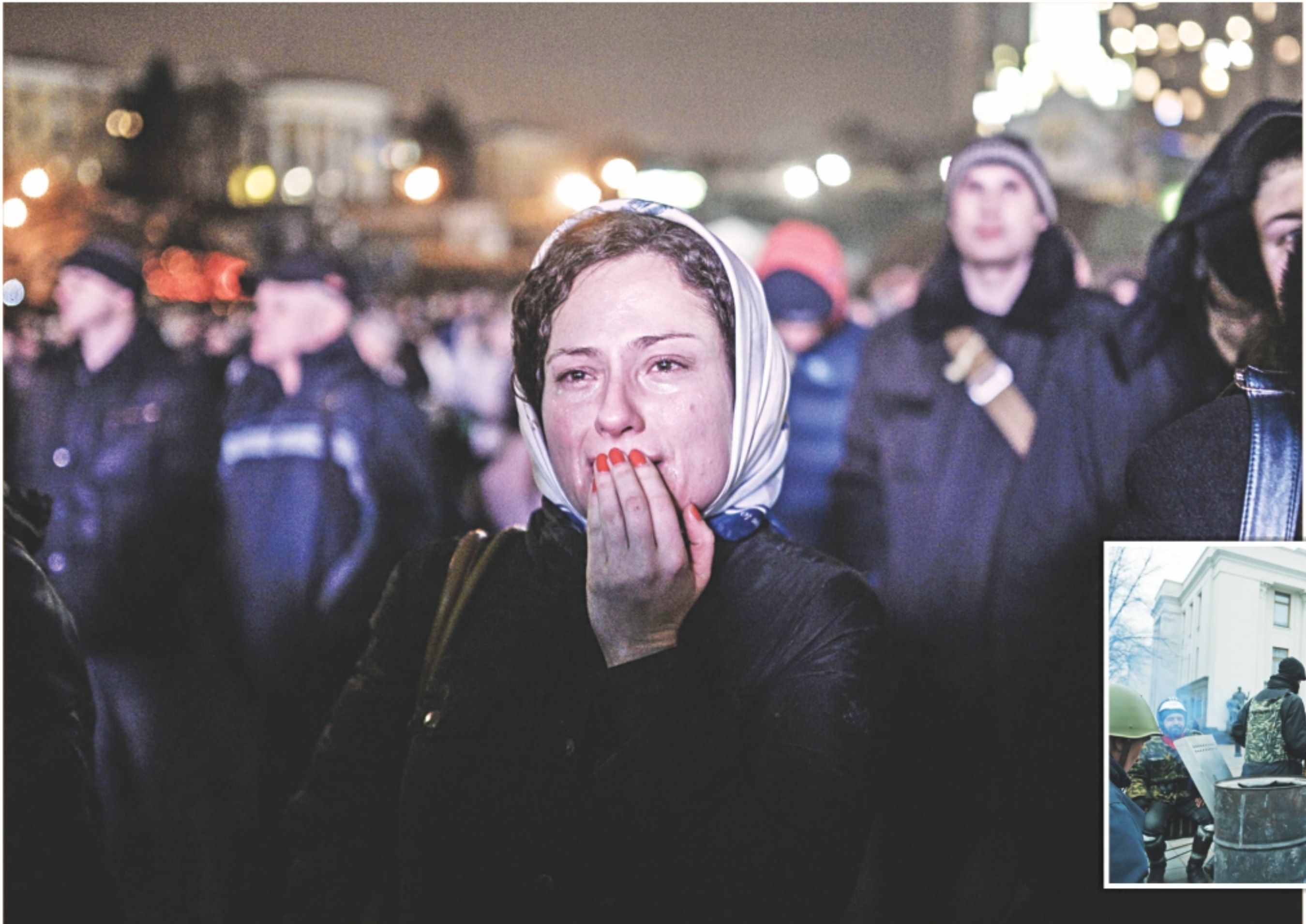
A limited reshuffle had been expected to allow army chief Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to step down as defence minister and run for president.

But Sisi, who is expected to win the election this spring, will retain his post in Mahlab's cabinet for around two weeks until an electoral law has been passed, a senior official told AFP.

Sisi, who emerged as the country's most popular political figure after ending Morsi's divisive one-year rule, has not yet announced his candidacy for the president, but aides say he has already decided to stand.

Analysts say the formation of a new government is likely to work in Sisi's favour.

"If Field Marshal Sisi decides to run, he would like to run with a government that has a good reputation and can help him by resolving some of the urgent problems faced by the people," said Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, a political science



A woman cries as she stays on Kiev's Independence Square, yesterday. Inset, Maidan self-defence activists guard at the Ukraine parliament during the session in Kiev. While Ukraine's opposition-dominated parliament yesterday delayed the highly-anticipated formation of a new government until tomorrow, it voted to apply to the International Criminal Court to prosecute Yanukovych over the "mass murder" of protesters.

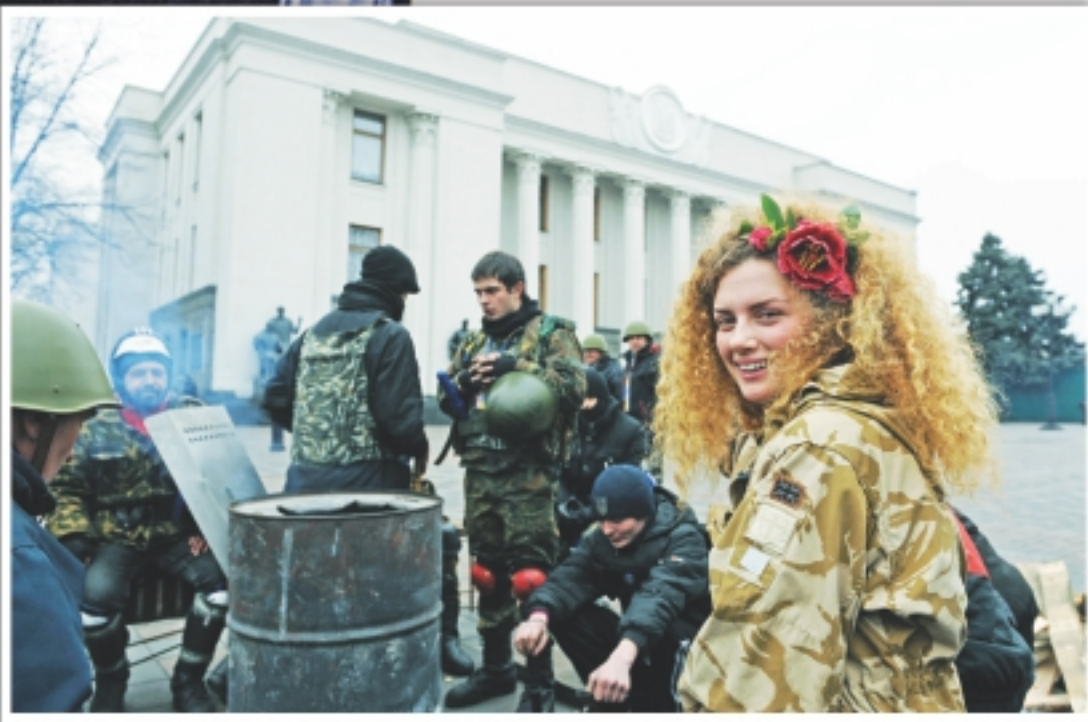


PHOTO: AFP

Lanka slams UN rights chief over 'interference'

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday accused the UN rights chief of "unwarranted interference" by calling for an international inquiry into allegations troops killed thousands of civilians at the end of the civil war.

The government of President Mahinda Rajapakse formally rejected the demand by rights chief Navi Pillay for an external investigation into what she had called "credible allegations" that 40,000 ethnic Tamil civilians were killed by Sri Lankan forces in 2009.

Pillay's recommendation to a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) meeting in Geneva next month "reflects bias and is tantamount to an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state", Colombo said in a statement.

The United States has already said it will move a third censure motion against Sri Lanka at the UNHRC, buttressing the recommendations of Pillay who visited Sri Lanka on a week-long fact-finding mission last August.

In her latest report, Pillay said the UNHRC could not have any faith in Sri Lanka to deliver justice internally and local courts had been "compromised by politicisation and interference by the executive".

In the UN document leaked 10 days ago but published officially on Monday, Pillay asked the UNHRC to set up an independent probe and said Colombo had "consistently failed to establish the truth".

Pillay's report noted fresh evidence of what took place during the final stages of the ethnic war that ended in May 2009 when an army onslaught crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam separatist guerrillas killing 40,000 Tamil civilians.



Navi Pillay

More than a million babies die on birth

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

More than a million babies around the world die on the day of their birth yearly and a million more are stillborn, according to Save the Children, which argues that most of these deaths are preventable.

Although great strides have been made in reducing the numbers of children dying under the age of five in the past decade – numbers have halved from 12 million to 6.6 million, there has not been enough progress in reducing the preventable deaths of newborn babies, says the charity.

Most of the deaths occur in developing countries. It said 1.2 million deaths occur during labour. It points to the global shortage of health workers who have the skills to help. It is estimated that 7.2 million more midwives, nurses and doctors are needed.

West, Russia move to ease Ukraine tensions

AFP, Kiev

Western diplomats scrambled yesterday to stave off an economic collapse in Ukraine, as Russia pledged not to intervene in the crisis-hit country after the dramatic ouster of pro-Moscow leader Viktor Yanukovych.

The bloc's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton travelled to Kiev and met with temporary, pro-West leader Oleksandr Turchynov as well as members of parliament, which called on the International Criminal Court in The Hague to prosecute Yanukovych.

Her trip is just the public tip of furious closed-door talks taking place between US, European and Russian diplomats over a country that has appealed for \$35 billion in aid to avoid bankruptcy and which according to Turchynov is facing a secessionist threat.

"We offer support, not interference for the future," Ashton told reporters in Kiev amid fears Ukraine's pro-Russia east could agitate for partition after a pro-Western administration took charge of the country following months of protests. She also stressed "the importance of the strong links between Ukraine and Russia and the importance of having them maintained."

Russia had initially reacted with fury to the weekend's rapid-fire political changes -- brought about by deadly clashes in Kiev last week that left nearly 100 dead -- accusing the new leadership of waging an "armed mutiny".

But Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday sought to soften the tone, saying Ukraine should not be forced to choose between Russia and the West.

"We confirmed our principled position of non-intervention in Ukraine's internal affairs," Lavrov said adding "we are interested in Ukraine being part of the European family, in all senses of the word".

The tumultuous events of the past week have capped more than three months of relentless protests against Yanukovych's rule sparked by his November decision to spurn an historic pact with the European Union in favour of closer ties with Russia.

'Third front' to take on Congress, BJP

IANS, New Delhi

The grouping of 11 non-UPA, non-NDA parties will contest the coming Lok Sabha elections and ensure defeat of the Congress and the BJP, CPI-M leader Prakash Karat said here yesterday.

Briefing reporters after meeting of 11 parties, which include the Samajwadi Party, AIADMK, Janata Dal-United (JD-U), Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) and four Left parties, Karat said the parties will work to provide an alternative to the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party at the centre.

"Leaders of 11 parties have resolved to fight upcoming Lok Sabha elections together," he said.

The meeting was not attended by Asom Gana Parishad and Biju Janata Dal but Karat said the leaders of these parties had conveyed in advance their reasons for not being able to attend.

"Keeping in mind Lok Sabha elections, we decided that leaders of 11 parties should meet and decide on cooperation and working together," he said.

Contending the "misrule" of Congress-led United Progressive Alliance has been marked by "massive corruption, unprecedented price rise,

INDIAN POLLS 2014



Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee kick-starts the party's polls campaign for Tripura in Agartala, yesterday.

acute distress of farmers and glaring inequalities", Karat said: "We do not want Congress and UPA to continue in power. We will work for defeat of Congress and UPA."

The BJP's basic policies were "no different" from those of the Congress, he said, claiming that on the issue of corruption, the record of BJP-ruled states and that of the National Democratic Alliance government was "as bad or worse as (of) Congress and UPA".

"Today, the challenge before us by the BJP and its prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi is the challenge to the very edifice of

secular society," Karat said.

He accused the BJP and "its mentor RSS" of communal agenda and said the grouping will "ensure that BJP and its allies are not able to come to power at the centre."

"We need alternative to BJP and Congress. Leaders of 11 parties resolved today to work together to present an alternative before the country," he said.

The leaders also issued a joint declaration which said they will present an alternative which will have "democratic, secular, federal and pro people" agenda.

NEWSIN brief



New Italy PM wins confidence vote

AFP, Rome

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi called for a "radical and immediate change" in recession-hit Italy as he outlined his new government's reform agenda before winning a crucial confidence vote in the Senate early yesterday. Renzi, who grasped power after helping oust his predecessor Enrico Letta over failures to do enough to boost a flagging economy, won the vote of confidence, with 169 votes in favour and 139 against, according to Senate speaker

Camels likely source of MERS virus: Study

AFP, Washington

A respiratory virus that has killed dozens of people, mainly in the Middle East, is widespread in camels and may be jumping directly from camels to humans, said a Columbia University study yesterday. Called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS, it has killed 79 of the 182 people infected since September 2012, according to the World

Clashes erupt in Kashmir over killings

AFP, Srinagar

Hundreds of angry villagers clashed with police in Indian Kashmir yesterday following suspicions that security forces shot dead seven civilians they mistook for rebels, a police officer and a witness said. The villagers torched a police station in the forested Kupwara region near the de facto border with Pakistan to demand security forces hand over the bodies for identification and for burial, the officer said. The situation was defused when police gave the bodies to a local Muslim religious group for burial, which was attended by

Wide Afghan support for post-Taliban govt

AFP, Washington

Despite a wave of violence, 80 percent of Afghans believe their government is in control of the country and oppose a return to the Taliban, a survey said Monday. The study comes as concern mounts in the West for Afghanistan's future. The United States is preparing to withdraw most of its troops this year, ending a war launched after the September 11, 2001

Boko Haram attack school, kill 29

AFP, Kano

Suspected Boko Haram Islamists killed 29 people when they opened fire on secondary school students as they slept in a dormitory, the latest school massacre in Nigeria's troubled northeast, security forces said.

It was not immediately clear if all of the dead were students.

Gunmen stormed the Federal Government College in the town of Buni Yadi in Yobe state at 2:00am, said military spokesman Lazarus Eli.

The name Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden" and school attacks have featured prominently in the group's four-and-half Islamist uprising, which has killed thousands of people.