

NEWS IN
briefShebab attack Somalia
intel HQ; 12 killed

AFP, Mogadishu

Somalia's Shebab rebels carried out a car bomb and gun attack against an intelligence headquarters in central Mogadishu on Sunday, leaving at least seven militants and five others dead. The al-Qaeda-linked militia claimed responsibility for the raid against the complex, which also houses a major detention facility.

Blast destroys Paris
building; 2 killed

AFP, Bobigny

An eight-year-old child and an octogenarian were killed and dozens injured in a suspected gas explosion yesterday that reduced half of a four-storey residential block in a Paris suburb to rubble, emergency services said. Rescue workers are combing the site for an estimated nine people, including two children, who are still unaccounted for, sources said.

42 children killed in
Syria in 36 hours

AFP, Beirut

At least 42 children have been killed in government air strikes and shelling across Syria in the last 36 hours, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said yesterday. It said 25 children had been killed between midnight on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, with 17 more killed between Friday and Saturday night.

BBC Trust to get first
female boss

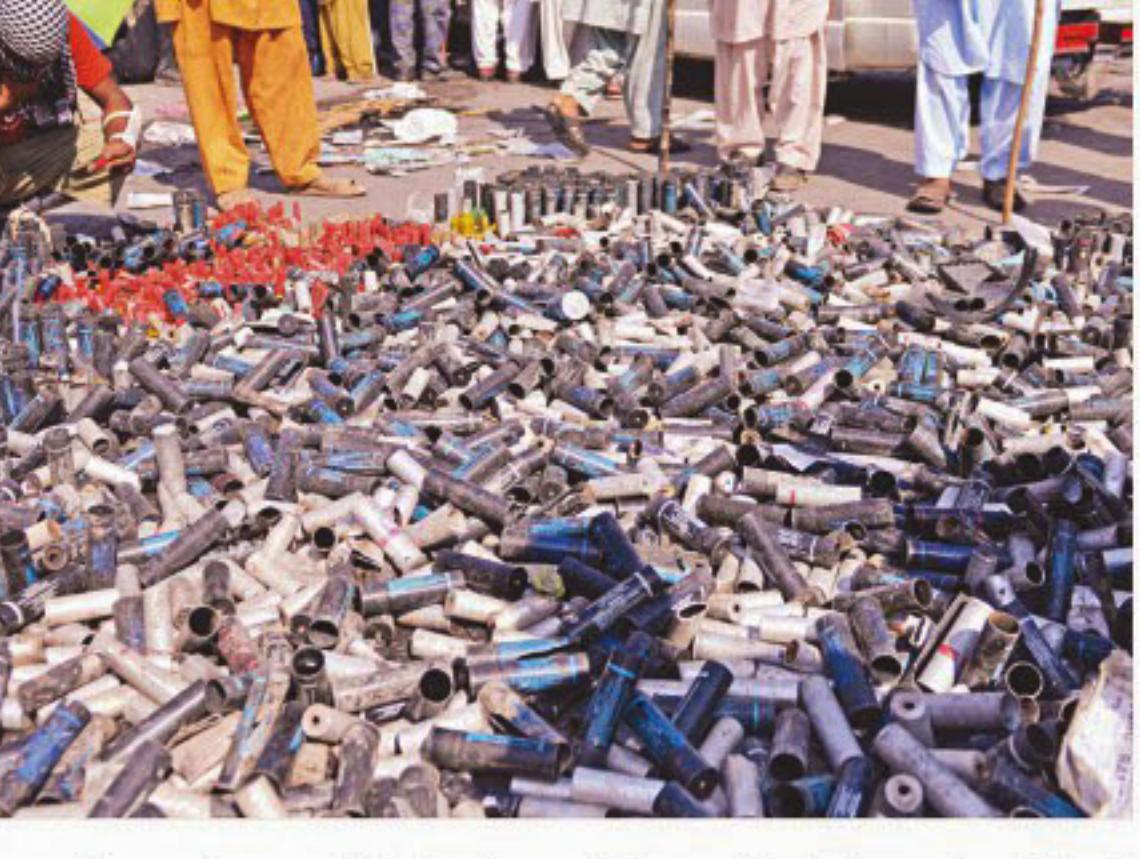
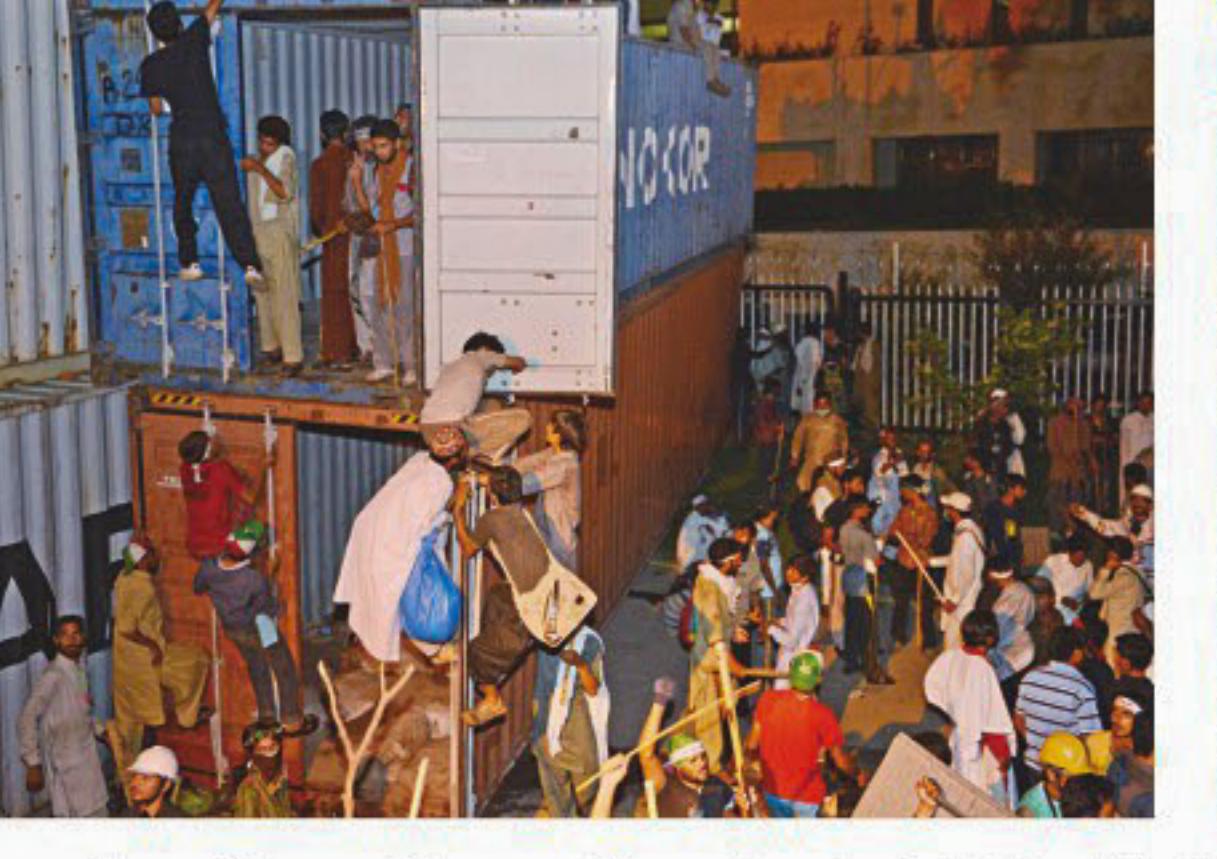
AFP, London

Former Financial Times Group chief Rona Fairhead is to become the first woman boss of the governing body of the BBC, the government said yesterday. Fairhead, 53, will replace Chris Patten, who quit as chairman of the BBC Trust in May after major heart surgery. Fairhead is also a non-executive director at PepsiCo and HSBC, and was chairwoman and chief executive of the Financial Times Group between 2006 and 2013.

Two more cured after
receiving Ebola drug

CNN ONLINE

Two more Liberian medical workers have survived Ebola. They were given ZMapp -- the experimental drug that's credited with saving the lives of two Americans infected with Ebola. Officials said that early treatment was key to the recovery of the Liberian medical workers.



From top, anti-clockwise, Pakistani riot police clash with supporters of Imran Khan and Canadian cleric Tahir ul Qadri near the prime minister's residence in Islamabad Red Zone; a demonstrator is being detained; protesters try to climb containers which were used to block the way of PM's house during the clashes. The last photo shows spent tear gas shells. Fierce clashes between Imran Khan, Tahir ul Qadri supporters and police on late Saturday killed 3 and wounded 481. Observers believe that the events in Islamabad will weaken PM Nawaz Sharif and may compel him to make significant concessions to the military.

PHOTO: AFP

After Gaza war,
Israel eyes landTel Aviv to expropriate 400
hectares of West Bank

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel announced plans to expropriate 400 hectares (988 acres) of Palestinian land in the Bethlehem area in the south of the occupied West Bank, the military said.

"On the instructions of the political echelon... 4,000 dunams (the settlement of) Gevaot is declared as state land," the army department charged with administering civil affairs in occupied territory said, adding that concerned parties have 45 days to appeal.

It said that the step stemmed from political decisions taken after the June killing of three Israeli teenagers snatched from a roadside in the same area, known to Israelis as Gush Etzion settlement bloc.

Israel has named three Palestinians from the southern West Bank city of Hebron as being behind the murders.

The Etzion settlements council welcomed the announcement, and said it was the prelude to expansion of the current Gevaot settlement.

It "paves the way for the new city of Gevaot", a statement said.

Settlement watchdog Peace Now expressed alarm.

"As far as we know, this declaration is unprecedented in its scope since the 1980s and can dramatically change the reality in the Gush Etzion and the Bethlehem areas," it said in a statement.

"Peace Now views this declaration as proof that Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu does not aspire for a new 'Diplomatic Horizon', but rather he continues to put obstacles to the two-state vision and promote a one-state solution."

Good news for heart
failure patients

New drug to cut deaths by 20pc

AFP, Washington

An experimental drug from Swiss pharma giant Novartis reduced deaths from chronic heart failure by 20 percent compared with an existing treatment, according to the results of a vast new study.

The new drug, called LCZ696, has been labelled a potential "blockbuster" with sales in the billions of dollars, say analysts.

Cardiovascular failure, in which the heart does not pump blood effectively, kills at least 26 million people a year worldwide.

Novartis unveiled the highly anticipated results on Saturday at a meeting of the European Society of Cardiology in Barcelona, Spain and simultaneously in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The study -- conducted with more than 8,400 patients in 47 countries over 27 months -- compared the safety and effectiveness of the drug on patients with heart failure to the current gold standard, Enalapril.

At the end of the observation period, 21.8 percent of participants taking LCZ696 died from heart failure, a fifth lower than the 26.5 percent who died taking Enalapril.

Novartis plans to request authorization to bring the medication to market from the US drug regulator by the end of the year, and from the European Union equivalent in early 2015.

The drug also reduced hospitalizations by 21 percent, the study showed.

Despite existing treatments, the mortality rate from heart failure remains high, with around 50 percent of patients dying within five years of diagnosis, Novartis said. The condition leads to shortness of breath, fatigue, and fluid retention in the arms and legs.

UK accused
of torture
in Nepal

APP, Kathmandu

British authorities funded a four-year-long intelligence operation in Nepal that led to Maoist rebels being arrested, tortured and killed during the country's civil war, according to the author of a new book on Kathmandu.

Launched in 2002, "Operation Mustang" targeted Maoist guerrillas and saw British intelligence agency MI6 fund safe houses and provide training in surveillance and counter-insurgency tactics to Nepal's army and spy agency, the National Investigation Department, writer Thomas Bell told AFP Saturday.

Nepal's decade-long civil war left more than 16,000 dead, with rebels and security forces accused of serious human rights violations including killings, rapes, torture and disappearances.

"According to senior Nepalese intelligence and army officials involved in the operation, British aid greatly strengthened their performance and led to about 100 arrests," said Bell, whose book "Kathmandu" hits stores in South Asia on Thursday. Many of them were tortured and killed, he added.

EU leaders pick
top diplomats

BBC ONLINE

European Union leaders on Saturday chose Polish prime minister Donald Tusk to chair their council and named Italian Federica Mogherini to run the bloc's foreign relations, as the EU prepared to threaten Russia with new sanctions over Ukraine.

A summit in Brussels shared the two coveted EU posts between a Kremlin critic from ex-communist Eastern Europe and the foreign minister of one of Moscow's biggest customers for gas. EU officials gave Ukraine's embattled President Petro Poroshenko a warm welcome and assurances of further support.

The appointment of Tusk as president of the European Council marked a major advance in influence for the eastern states who joined the bloc this century and who share non-member Ukraine's concerns about Russian president Vladimir Putin's ambitions. But many of the powerful western countries have hesitated to toughen trade sanctions for fear of damaging their own economies. Some of them, like Italy, are heavily reliant on Russian gas.

In her first comments, Mogherini, who will replace incumbent Catherine Ashton in November, stressed the need to work for a lasting diplomatic deal with Russia. "As we think and we work on the level of sanctions, we also have to keep the diplomatic way open... hoping that the combination, a wise combination, can be effective," she said.

Ex-communist states had deadlocked an earlier summit two months ago by opposing Mogherini as too soft on Russia.

The move of Tusk, a former student activist in the anti-Communist Solidarity movement, will force an upheaval in the government in Warsaw ahead of an election due next year.

In Brussels, he pledged to address British Prime Minister David Cameron's concerns over growing EU powers and immigration from eastern Europe to help avoid London quitting the Union.



Donald Tusk



Mogherini

IMRAN KHAN, KEJRIWAL
Bad news for democracy

AGENCIES

Imran Khan has just showed the world the real strength of democracy. Much like Khan, Arvind Kejriwal also began (and continues) his political journey as a disruptive force. Both professed commitment to a good cause, made several naive voters believe they are sincere and different from other politicians, and when given a chance to prove their worth, threw it away because matching actions with rhetoric is always tough.

More than a year after Pakistan's national elections, Khan is yet to reconcile himself with its results and like a child who will not listen to reason, insists that the country's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif must resign. Kejriwal was elected as chief minister of Delhi but couldn't produce anything except some unrealistic poll pledges and had to resign in a peculiar way. The same goes to Khan.

Few would argue against the substance of Khan's complaints that the electoral process needs major reforms and that corruption throttles the economy. Instead, most debate focuses on just why Khan is so confident that he will succeed in dethroning Sharif, despite the prime minister's nationwide support and Khan's falling stock.

Sharif has angered the powerful military by few actions -- trial of Musharraf, seeking good ties with India and peace talks with Taliban. And not to forget, Sharif's this term

in power is the first transition of power to a democratically elected government to other in Pakistan, which itself possess a threat to military's dominance.

For now, the most Khan is likely to achieve in challenging Sharif is further strengthening the military's already strong hold on key decisions guiding the country's future.

Both Khan and Kejriwal were no different from other politicians. They were probably worse. A regular politician knows the limits of what a government can do. Khan and Kejriwal think a government can do anything defying political and economic sense. Like most who join politics, all they ever wanted was a share in the power pie. Which is why Kejriwal gave up chiefministership of Delhi in the hopes of becoming the prime minister and Khan is ignoring Khyber Sharif.

The crucial difference, however, is that Khans are in a position to cause real damage to Pakistan while the strength of India's democracy can accommodate and ignore the antics of Kejriwals.

For a country which has just started a difficult journey towards making democracy a norm rather than exception, Khan is indeed a very bad news.

Fortunately, there are no shortcuts to success, even in politics of rousing masses to a high pitch. When the likes of Khan and Kejriwal fall from grace, the fall is steeper and spectacular.

IRAQ
CRISIS

Iraqi forces broke through to the jihadist besieged town of Amerli yesterday, where thousands of people have been trapped for more than two months with dwindling food and water, officials said. The UN envoy to Iraq earlier warned that people there faced a "possible massacre" by the besieging militants.

"Our forces entered Amerli and broke the siege," Iraqi security spokesman Lieutenant General Qassem Atta told AFP.

Talib al-Bayati, an official responsible for a nearby area,

also said that the siege of the Turkmen Shia-majority town

has been broken, as did Nihad al-

Bayati, who had been fighting to

defend the town against the

juridists.

Iraqi security forces, Shia militiamen and Kurdish peshmerga fighters all took part in the operation, which

was launched on Saturday after days

of preparations in which the various forces deployed for the assault and Iraqi aircraft carried out strikes against militants.

While forces from Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region have previously made gains in the north with backing from American air strikes, the Amerli operation was the first major offensive success for the federal government since the conflict began.

The United States announced that it carried out three air strikes in the Amerli area, the first time its more than three-week air campaign against jihadists in Iraq has been expanded outside the north.

And aircraft from the United States, Australia, France and the United Kingdom also dropped humanitarian aid to the town, the Pentagon announced on Saturday.

Filipino UN
peacekeepers
escape siege

AFP, Manila

Dozens of Filipino UN peacekeepers performed the "greatest escape" from besieging Syrian rebels, slipping away under the cover of night after rebels rammed their Golan Heights outpost with armed trucks, the Philippine military said yesterday.

All 75 soldiers serving with a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Middle East flashpoint zone reached safety after the rebels, some linked to al-Qaeda, surrounded them and demanded their weapons on Thursday, military chief General Gregorio Catapang said.

Catapang called it "the greatest escape" and praised the soldiers.

"Although they were surrounded and outnumbered they held their ground," he told reporters.

However the fate of 44 UN peacekeepers from Fiji remained unknown. The Fijians were taken captive by rebels just before the Filipinos were besieged.

The troops are part of a UN peacekeeping force which has been stationed in the Golan Heights since 1974 to monitor a ceasefire between Israel and Syria.

President Benigno Aquino's spokesman Herminio Coloma issued a statement thanking the UN force as well as Syria, Israel, Qatar and the United States for their assistance in the crisis.