

NEWS IN
brief

Nepal resumes search for trekkers

AFP, Kathmandu
Nepal rescue workers, who had planned to end their search, yesterday returned to the mountains to look for survivors yesterday after receiving fresh information suggesting that more people may still be stranded on the popular Annapurna Circuit route. At least 43 people were killed and more than 500 people have been airlifted to safety since a snowstorm hit the region last Tuesday at the height of the trekking season, triggering avalanches.

Total's CEO dies in Moscow plane crash

BBC ONLINE
Christophe de Margerie, the chief executive of French oil company Total, yesterday died in an air crash in Moscow. His corporate jet collided with a snow plough and was then engulfed in flames. All four people on board were killed. The driver of the snow plough was drunk, according to Russian investigators. Mr de Margerie, 63, had been chief executive of Europe's third largest oil company since 2007. He was highly regarded within the oil industry.



Myanmar sets date for 2015 polls

AFP, Yangon
Landmark elections in Myanmar that could propel opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party into office have been provisionally scheduled for late next year, electoral officials said yesterday. The 2015 general election, seen as a key test of Myanmar's democratic reforms, is due to be held in the final week of October or the first week of November, Union Election Commission chairman Tin Aye said at a meeting with political parties in Yangon.

Former Australian PM Gough Whitlam dies

AFP, Sydney
Former Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam, a towering figure who led the nation through a period of massive change and remains the country's only leader to be sacked, died Tuesday aged 98. He was credited with transforming Australian society in the 1970s after 23 years of conservative government, introducing many far-reaching reforms. He spent less than three years in office but much of the legacy of his government's reforms remains today.



China executed 2,400 last year: Amnesty

AFP, Beijing
The world's top executioner China put 2,400 people to death last year, a US-based rights group said yesterday, shedding rare light on a statistic Beijing considers a state secret. The figure was a fall of 20 percent from 2012, the Dui Hua Foundation said, and a fraction of the 12,000 in 2002. The total for the rest of the world combined was 778 people in 2013, according to campaign group Amnesty International's annual report earlier this year.

Gaza ceasefire talks to restart next week

AFP, Gaza City
Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are to resume talks on a durable Gaza ceasefire next week in Cairo, a senior official of the Islamist movement Hamas which rules the territory said Monday. A source close to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, contacted by AFP, gave no comment on the reported resumption of talks.



People listen to long-awaited talks between student leaders and senior government officials being broadcasted live at a protest site in the Mongkok district of Hong Kong, yesterday. Hong Kong's embattled leader said he was open to creating a more democratic election committee before elections in 2017, extending a potential olive branch to democracy protesters as crunch talks to end the demonstrations got underway.

Iran offers 'compromises' in nuke talks, West unmoved

REUTERS, Ankara/new York
Iran is pushing what it portrays as a new compromise proposal in nuclear talks, but Western negotiators say it offers no viable concessions, underscoring how far apart the two sides are as they enter crunch time before a Nov 24 deadline.
In the negotiations with six major powers, the Iranians say they are no longer demanding a total end to economic sanctions in return for curbing their nuclear program and would accept initially lifting just the latest, most damaging, sanctions.
Western officials dismiss the proposal as nothing new and say the Iranians have always known that the sanctions could only end gradually - with each measure being suspended and later terminated only after Iranian compliance had been proven.
The officials say that in talks in Vienna they too have offered what they call compromises over demands that

Iran limit its nuclear program, but they have been rejected by Tehran.
"The bottom line is that they do not appear willing to limit their enrichment program to a level we would find acceptable," a European diplomat said. "We may have no choice but to extend the talks past November ... It's either that or let the talks collapse."
Under their most recent offer, Iranian officials have told Reuters that Iran's leadership would be satisfied with removing crippling US and European Union energy and banking sanctions imposed in 2012.
They described this as a major stepdown from Iran's consistent calls for the removal of all sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic because of its refusal to heed UN Security Council demands that it halt uranium enrichment work.
Tehran calls the sanctions unfair and illegal.
The proposal by Iranian negotiators in talks with the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China

has the backing of the Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian officials say.
"For the other party involved, it might be only a political issue, but for Iran what is in danger is the existence of the establishment if the economic hardship continues," a senior Iranian official said.
Building on a UN Security Council sanctions resolution passed in 2010, the United States and EU in 2012 imposed major sanctions against Iranian oil and gas companies and strengthened restrictions on the country's central bank.
Under the US National Defense Authorization Act Section 1245, Washington also forced Iran's major oil customers to greatly reduce their purchases of Iranian oil or face having their banks cut off from the US financial system.
The result has been a sharp drop in Iranian oil revenues, soaring inflation and unemployment and a weak Iranian currency.

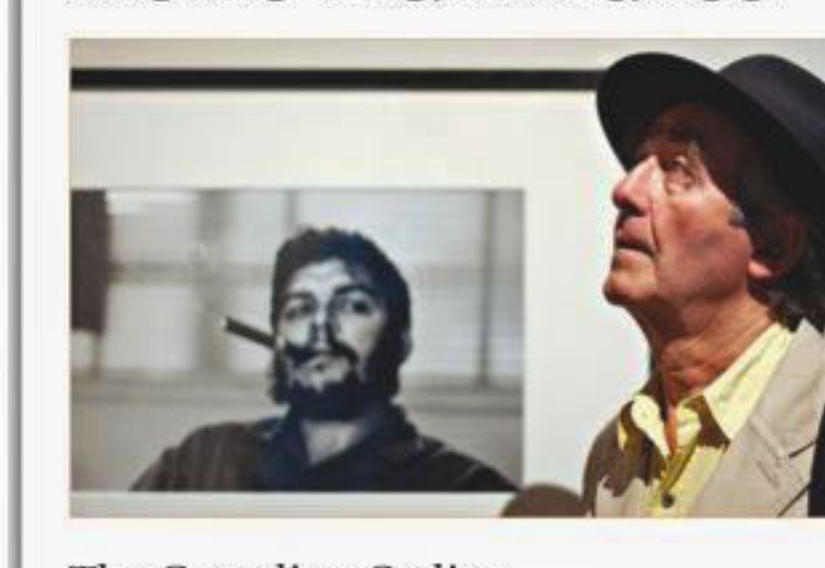
Violence kills a child in every 5 minutes: UN

REUTERS, London
One child dies every five minutes as a result of violence, but only a minority die in war zones, according to a report by the UN children's agency Unicef.
About 75 percent of the estimated 345 violent deaths that occur daily happen in countries at peace, the report said.
"We are uncovering the fact that children experience extreme violence in everyday life, everywhere," Susan Bissell, global head of child protection for Unicef told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.
In some countries, deaths from violence are rolling back gains made in preventing childhood deaths from disease or hunger.
"What is shocking is that we have for two or three decades focused a lot, and importantly, on child mortality from preventable diseases, and what this report says is that we need to be thinking about child mortality from all causes,"



Bissell said.
In Brazil, the number of children dying from preventable disease before the age of five has dropped since 2000, but almost 15,000 lives have been lost to violence in adolescence, said Leah Kreitzman, head of campaigns and advocacy for Unicef UK.
Millions of children are vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse in their homes, schools and communities.
"Children are getting their mental and physical health permanently damaged by violence every day," she added.
War amplifies and magnifies the violence that children normally experience every day.
Where there is a pejorative view of girls and boys, or where there is impunity and no rule of law, it simply becomes worse for children when war breaks out, Bissell said.
Education can help protect children in many conflicts. It gives children a sense of normality, but also can protect them from being recruited by armed groups.

photographer René Burri dies



The Guardian Online
The Swiss photographer René Burri, celebrated for his portraits of Che Guevara and Pablo Picasso, died on Monday in Zurich aged 81, the Magnum Photo agency said. Burri had been suffering from a long illness, Magnum said.
Burri started working for Magnum in 1956 and covered major political events around the world. Among his most famous works were an iconic portrait of the revolutionary Che Guevara smoking a cigar, as well as portraits of Fidel Castro and Picasso. He left his archives of some 30,000 pictures to the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne.

Afghan poppy cultivation hits all-time high in 2013

REUTERS, Washington
Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan hit an all-time high in 2013 despite years of counter-narcotics efforts that have cost the United States \$7.6 billion, the US government watchdog for Afghanistan reconstruction spending said on Tuesday.
The UN Office on Drugs and Crime reported that Afghan farmers grew an "unprecedented" 209,000 hectares (516,000 acres) of opium poppy in 2013, surpassing the previous high of 193,000 hectares (477,000 acres) in 2007, said John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction.
"In past years, surges in opium poppy cultivation have been met by a coordinated response from the US government and coalition partners, which has led to a temporary decline in levels of opium produc-

tion," Sopko said in a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and other top US officials.
"The recent record-high level of poppy cultivation calls into question the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of those prior efforts," he said.
Afghanistan produces more than 80 percent of the world's illicit opium, and profits from the illegal trade help fund the Taliban insurgency.
The United States has spent \$7.6 billion on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan since launching the programs following the start of the 2001 war, it said.
Sopko said the UN drug office estimated the value of poppy cultivation and opium products produced in Afghanistan in 2013 at about \$3 billion, a 50 percent increase over the \$2 billion estimated in 2012.

ISIS threatens whole region

Says Iraq PM in Iran; Syria Kurds weather new ISIS assault

AGENCIES

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi yesterday said his country was at war with "terrorists" threatening the region and intent on dividing Muslims, as he met top officials in key ally Iran.
Abadi, from Iraq's Shia majority, met with President Hassan Rohani and Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri during the one-day visit.
Before the visit Abadi ruled out a foreign troop intervention against ISIS and appeared to impose limits on Iran's participation also, saying in the holy Shia city of Najaf on Monday that "no regional power will fight here."
Meanwhile, Kurdish fighters in the battleground Syrian town of Kobane weathered another onslaught by ISIS militants yesterday.
Fighting continued in Kobane but appeared to have lessened after a fierce attack by ISIS fighters, including suicide bombers, late on Monday, witnesses and monitors said.
Kobane has become a crucial symbolic battleground in the war against ISIS, which is fighting to extend areas under its control in Iraq and Syria where it has declared an Islamic "caliphate".
Ankara announced on Monday that it would help Kurdish forces from Iraq to relieve Kobane's beleaguered defenders, in a major shift of policy that was swiftly welcomed by Washington.
Meanwhile, senior Whitehall sources have disclosed that armed Reaper drones would be operating in Syria, initially for surveillance, but also in an attack capacity with Hellfire missiles if authorisation is given.
In another development, a series of bombs targeting restaurants across Baghdad killed at least 21 people yesterday, police and medics said. Since last week, the Iraqi capital has seen a rise in the number of bomb attacks, several of which have been claimed by IS.
In Pakistan, Taliban spokesman Shahidullah Shahid has been sacked after pledging allegiance to ISIS.
It emerged last week that Shahidullah Shahid and five other Pakistan Taliban (TTP) commanders had defected to IS which controls parts of Iraq and Syria.

DEVELOPMENTS

British drones to attack jihadists in Syria, Iraq

Baghdad restaurant blasts kill 21

Pak Taliban sack spokesman for ISIS vow



Smoke and flames rise following an air strike explosion in the Syrian town of Kobane on late Monday.

ARY news suspended in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan on Monday suspended a television channel supportive of anti-government protests being held by cricketer-turned politician Imran Khan and a populist cleric in the capital Islamabad.
ARY News, a popular station, is being taken off air for 15 days for "malicious honoursable courts and judiciary," the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) said in a statement yesterday.
ARY News was also fined 10 million rupees (\$97,089), the media authority added in the statement, saying that the channel has a history of not complying with PEMRA laws.

Woman set on fire on a train in India

BBC ONLINE
A woman has died of her injuries after being set on fire on a train in the Indian state of Kerala.
The woman, identified as Fathima, 45, had been seen having an argument with man on the station platform in the town of Kannur early on Monday.
She boarded a stationary train and was seen running out shortly afterwards in flames. Police say they are looking for the suspect.
Police suspect that Fathima was doused in alcohol before being set on fire while she was sitting in the train compartment. The seat covers were also burned.
Babu said the police could not take a statement before her death, as she was too seriously injured.

Paralysed man walks again after cell transplant

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Millions of paralysis sufferers are offered the possibility of a cure for the first time yesterday after a new technique pioneered by British doctors allowed a man with a severed spinal cord to recover the ability to walk.
A revolutionary implant of regenerative cells has knitted back together the spinal cord of a wheelchair-bound firefighter paralysed from the chest down in a knife attack, restoring sensation and muscle control to his legs.
The astonishing breakthrough by an Anglo-Polish medical team is the first ever instance where a complete spinal paralysis has been reversed and represents the potential conquering of one of the greatest challenges in medical science. If validated, it offers hope of a life-changing therapy to the 2.5m people paralysed by spinal injury in Britain and across the world.
Doctors implanted harvested cells into an 8mm gap in the spinal cord of Darek Fidyka, a Bulgarian who was confined to a wheelchair in 2010 after an attacker stabbed him in the back, slicing cleanly through his



spine. His doctors had given him a less than one per cent chance of even the slightest recovery. But doctors report that the OEC implants on the two "stumps" of the cord slowly restored the nerve fibre connections between both sides of the injury, returning feeling and then movement to Darek's legs. Some ten months after the surgery, the 40-year-old former part-time firefighter was able to walk with the aid of braces and a walking frame. He is now able to drive and live more independently.

USE OF CLUSTER BOMBS Ukraine denies HRW report

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's armed forces yesterday rejected allegations that they indiscriminately used banned "cluster bombs" in the six-month war against pro-Russian insurgents in the separatist east.
Human Rights Watch on Monday published a detailed investigation carried out jointly with The New York Times that identified 12 incidents in which these weapons killed six people -- including a Swiss aid worker -- in and around the rebel-held city of Donetsk earlier this month.
The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions banning their use has been signed by 113 parties but not Ukraine or the United States.