

NEWSIN brief

HK activists mark one month of protest

AFP, Hong Kong
Hong Kong democracy activists yesterday marked one month of mass protests as student leaders said they would consider asking senior Chinese Communist party officials to meet them directly, the first time such a request has been made. Thousands gathered for an evening rally at the main protest camp, unfurling umbrellas to mark the event.

Japan nuke plant to restart after tsunami

REUTERS, Tokyo
A town in southwest Japan yesterday became the first to approve the restart of a nuclear power station, a step forward in Japan's fraught process of reviving an industry left idled by the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011. The restart of Japan's first reactors to receive clearance to restart under new rules imposed since Fukushima is unlikely until next year as Kyushu Electric still needs to pass operational safety checks.

India to modernise Vietnam's defences

AFP, New Delhi
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday promised to strengthen Vietnam's military following talks between leaders of the two allies, in a move likely to rankle neighbouring nuclear-armed giant China. Modi said India would sell naval patrol boats to Vietnam under a \$100 million line of credit to the Southeast Asian nation, which is trying to improve its defences in the disputed South China Sea.

Bahrain bans main opposition party

AFP, Dubai
A Bahrain court banned the Gulf state's main opposition movement for three months yesterday, just weeks before a parliamentary election the group had already said it would boycott, a court official said. The Manama court ruled that Al-Wefaq, a mainly Shia-based party, had violated the law on associations.

1984 riots: US court summons Amitabh

TNN, Ialandhar
Bollywood mega star Amitabh Bachchan has been summoned by Los Angeles federal court for allegedly instigating violence against the Sikh community during the November 1984 massacre. Bachchan has been accused of raising "KhoonKaBadlaKhoon" (blood for blood) slogan on October 31, 1984 after Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her two Sikh bodyguards.



ISIS launches assault on Idlib

Massacre as jihadists nearly take Syrian provincial capital

AGENCIES
Syria almost lost its second city to the jihadists of ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra Monday night when hundreds of fighters stormed into the provincial capital, Idlib, captured the newly installed governor's office and began beheading Syrian army officers.

By the time government troops recaptured the building, at least 70 soldiers - many senior officers - had been executed, leaving one of the oldest cities in Syria in chaos. "They were slaughtered," a message to Damascus said before the army was able to declare Idlib saved. Their murder - by ritual beheading with a knife rather than shooting - was entirely in keeping with ISIS policy.

The eastern city of Raqqa has been in the hands of ISIS for months, but Idlib lies strategically placed between Aleppo and the coastal city of Latakia - both of which are still held by President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Idlib's fall would have been a devastating blow to the government.

The ferocity of the attack - some soldiers managed to call Damascus to alert the government to their imminent

execution - shows just how hard-pressed the Syrian regime is in its battle against the same enemy that the US President, Barack Obama, has promised to "degrade and destroy". Degraded was the one thing the armed men who stormed Idlib appeared not to be.

Meanwhile, dozens of Kurdish peshmerga fighters left a base in north-

WAR ON ISIS

US air strikes cost **\$8.3m** a day

Iraqi Kurds on way to join Kobane fight

Blast kills **27** Shia militiamen in Iraq

ern Iraq yesterday and headed for the battleground Syrian town of Kobane, an AFP journalist reported.

The town on the Turkish border has become a crucial front in the fight against the ISIS group, which overran large parts of Iraq in June and also holds significant territory in Syria.

Last week, under heavy US pressure, Turkey unexpectedly announced it

would allow the peshmerga fighters to cross its territory to join the fight for Kobane.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon has revised its estimate of the cost of the US air war in Iraq and Syria, saying the price tag for the campaign against the Islamic State group comes to about \$8.3 million a day.

Since air strikes began on August 8, the campaign - which has involved about 6,600 sorties by US and allied aircraft - has cost \$580 million, said Pentagon spokesman Commander Bill Urban.

The Defense Department had previously put the average daily cost of the military operation at more than \$7 million a day.

In Iraq, a suicide bomber killed at least 27 Shia militiamen outside the Iraqi town of Jurf al-Sakhar on Monday after security forces pushed ISIS militants out of the area over the weekend, army and police sources said.

The attacker, driving a Humvee vehicle packed with explosives and likely stolen from defeated government troops, also wounded 60 Shia Muslim militiamen, who had helped government forces retake the town.

Evolution doesn't collide with existence of God

Pope says Big Bang is right and God isn't 'a magician'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



The theories of evolution and the Big Bang are real and God is not "a magician with a magic wand", Pope Francis has declared.

Speaking at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the Pope made comments which experts said put an end to the "pseudo theories" of creationism and intelligent design that some argue were encouraged by his predecessor, Benedict XVI.

Francis explained that both scientific theories were not incompatible with the existence of a creator - arguing instead that they "require it".

"When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so," Francis said.

He added: "He created human beings and let them develop according to the internal laws that he gave to each one so they would reach their fulfilment.

"The Big Bang, which today we hold to be the

origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of the divine creator but, rather, requires it.

"Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve."

The Catholic Church has long had a reputation for being anti-science - most famously when Galileo faced the inquisition and was forced to retract his "heretic" theory that the Earth revolved around the Sun.

But Pope Francis's comments were more in keeping with the progressive work of Pope Pius XII, who opened the door to the idea of evolution and actively welcomed the Big Bang theory. In 1996, John Paul II went further and suggested evolution was "more than a hypothesis" and "effectively proven fact".

Yet more recently, Benedict XVI and his close advisors have apparently endorsed the idea that intelligent design underpins evolution - the idea that natural selection on its own is insufficient to explain the complexity of the world.



Smoke billows after a jet fighter hit Kobani, also known as Ain al-Arab, yesterday. Turkey wants the anti-Damascus Free Syrian Army (FSA) to control the Syrian border town of Kobane if Islamist jihadists are defeated, and not the forces of separatist Kurds or President Bashar al-Assad, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said yesterday.

Child poverty up in developed world

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Child poverty has increased in 23 countries in the developed world since the start of the global recession in 2008, potentially trapping a generation in a life of material deprivation and reduced prospects.

A new report by Unicef published yesterday says the number of children entering into poverty during the recession is 2.6 million greater than the number who have been lifted out of it.

"The longer these children remain trapped in the cycle of poverty, the harder it will be for them to escape," it says in Children of Recession: the impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries.

Greece and Iceland have seen the biggest percentage increases in child poverty since 2008, followed by Latvia, Croatia and Ireland. The proportion of children living in poverty in the UK has increased from 24% to 25.6%.

Eighteen of the 41 countries in the study have seen falls in child poverty, topped by Chile which has seen a reduction from 31.4% to 22.8%.

Norway has the lowest child poverty rate, at 5.3% (down from 9.6% in 2008), and Greece has the highest, at 40.5% (up from 23% in 2008). Latvia and Spain also have child poverty rates above 36%. In the US, the rate is 32%.

"In the past five years, rising numbers of children and their families have experienced difficulty in satisfying their most basic material and educational needs," says the report.

"Unemployment rates not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s have left many families unable to provide the care, protection and opportunities to which children are entitled."

US modifies quarantine guidelines after uproar

AFP, Washington

US health authorities yesterday issued new guidelines for health workers returning from Ebola-hit nations after a firestorm of criticism over state quarantine restrictions, including from the UN chief.

The enforced quarantine in New Jersey of a US nurse who had come home after treating patients in Sierra Leone sparked controversy - and accusations from the woman that her rights had been violated.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) yesterday urged active monitoring of those at risk following stints in the countries hardest hit by the epidemic - Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"Active direct monitoring" means high-risk people must be checked for fever daily for 21 days, and must restrict their travel and public activities for the

duration of the virus's incubation period, the CDC said, in an update of previous guidelines.

The new guidelines - which the CDC does not have the power to enforce on a national level - stop short of a strict quarantine.

That is the standard New Jersey and New York states had adopted, following the first confirmed case of the disease in New York - a doctor who had treated patients in Guinea.

Those measures drew criticism from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and in Washington.

"Returning health workers are exceptional people who are giving of themselves for humanity," Ban said.

"They should not be subjected to restrictions that are not based on science. Those who develop infections should be supported, not stigmatised," he said in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

EBOLA CRISIS

US used 1,000 Nazis as Cold War spies: Report

BBC ONLINE

Declassified US records reveal the nation's intelligence chiefs used hundreds of Nazis as spies and informants after World War Two.

Central Intelligence Agency officials are said to have turned to the country's former enemies to help beat the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Academics studying the documents say America used at least 1,000 ex-Nazis. Some had served at the highest levels of the Nazi Party, and were recruited to work as spies for the US in Europe.

Former SS officer Otto von Bolschwing reportedly wrote policy papers on how to terrorise Jews, but was hired by the CIA to spy in Europe after World War Two.

The agency is said to have relocated him and his family to New York in the

1950s as a reward for loyal service.

Nazi collaborator Aleksandras Lileikis - linked to the massacres of tens of thousands of Jews in Lithuania - was recruited by the US as a spy in East Germany and later brought over to Boston.

There's evidence the CIA even tried to intervene when Lileikis became the subject of a war crimes investigation.

Records indicate long-time FBI director J Edgar Hoover not only approved of the use of ex-Nazis as spies, he also dismissed the horrific acts they'd been involved in during the war as Soviet propaganda.

The revelations come one week after an Associated Press investigation found the US government had paid dozens of suspected Nazi war criminals millions of dollars in Social Security benefits after forcing them to leave the US.



"Dear mum, don't cry"

Final message of woman executed in Iran for killing 'attempted rapist'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The final message of a woman executed in Iran for killing a man she said tried to rape her has been released, telling her mother she would have justice in "the court of God".

Reyhaneh Jabbari, 26, was hanged on Saturday despite an international campaign for her release over her seven years in prison.

She left her final will in a voice message to her mother, Sholeh Pakravan, in April, according to the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which released the English translation.

Jabbari recorded it on the day she learned she would be executed, saying she had "given in" to death.

"Dear Sholeh, don't cry for what you are hearing," she said.

"The world did not love us - it did not want my fate. In the court of God I will charge the inspectors...and all those that out of ignorance or with their lies wronged me and trampled on my rights and didn't pay heed to the fact that sometimes what appears as reality is different from it."

She was sentenced to death by a Tehran court in 2009 for killing Morteza Abdolali Sarbandi, a former employee of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence who she said tried to sexually abuse her, and the verdict was upheld by Iran's Supreme Court despite a legal challenge.

Judges ruled that she stabbed him in the back in 2007 after purchasing a knife two days earlier but although she admitted stabbing him once, she claimed another man killed him.

In her message, Jabbari said she believed she would have been murdered that night if she had not fought back. Court documents said the execution was carried out after Sarbandi's family refused to pardon Jabbari or accept blood money.

The execution was described as a "travesty" by Amnesty International.

Asking her mother to ensure her organs were donated after her death, Jabbari said she did "not want to rot under the soil".

"I am telling you from the bottom of my heart that I don't want to have a grave for you to come and mourn there and suffer. I don't want you to wear black clothing for me.

"I wanted to embrace you until I die. I love you."

Population time-bomb ticking

Scientists say even global catastrophe wouldn't halt boom

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The global human population is "locked in" to an inexorable rise this century and will not be easily shifted, even by apocalyptic events such as a third world war or lethal pandemic, a study has found.

There is no "quick fix" to the population time-bomb, because there are now so many people even unimaginable global disasters won't stop growth, scientists have concluded.

Although measures designed to reduce human fertility in the parts of the world where the population growth is fastest will eventually have a long-term impact on numbers, this has to go hand-in-hand with policies aimed at reducing the consumption of natural resources, they said.

Two prominent ecologists, who normally study animal populations in the wild, have concluded that the number of people in the world today will present one of the most daunting problems for sustainable living on the planet in the coming century - even if every country adopts a draconian "one child" policy.

"The inexorable demographic momentum of the global human population is rapidly eroding Earth's life-support system," say Professor Corey Bradshaw of the University of Adelaide and Professor Barry

Brook of the University of Tasmania in their study, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"Assuming a continuation of current trends in mortality reduction, even a rapid transition to a worldwide one-child policy leads to a population similar to today's by 2100," they say.

"Even a catastrophic mass mortality event



of 2bn deaths over a hypothetical window in the mid-21st century would still yield around 8.5bn people by 2100," they add.

There are currently about 7.1bn people on Earth, and demographers estimate that this number could rise to about 9bn by 2050 - and as many as 25bn by 2100, although this is based on current fertility rates, which are expected to fall over the coming decades.

Russia backs rebel polls in Ukraine

AFP, Moscow

Russia announced yesterday it will recognise separatist polls in Ukraine next weekend, fuelling tensions with the country's newly elected pro-Western leaders as they negotiate on forming a coalition government.

The rebel elections on Sunday should "go ahead as agreed," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"We will of course recognise the results," he told the Izvestia daily.

Moscow rejects accusations in Kiev and Western capitals that it is behind the armed uprising in Ukraine in which some 3,700 people have been killed since April.

However, the decision to lend legitimacy to the rebels' leadership vote was one of most overt acts of support so far for the two pro-Russian and unrecognised "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai attend a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday. Afghanistan and China pledged a long-term partnership yesterday as Ghani began a four-day visit while Nato combat troops prepare to withdraw from his country.