

NEWS IN brief

Final report on Gujarat riots submitted

PTI, Gandhinagar
Justice Nanavati Commission yesterday submitted its final report on the 2002 Gujarat riots to state chief minister Anandiben Patel. The final report of the commission on the riots, in which more than 1,000 people, mostly of minority community, were killed, comes after extensive investigation which ran over a period of more than 12 years.

Harvard sued over 'racial profiling'

AFP, New York
A nonprofit group filed a lawsuit Monday against Harvard University, accusing the world-famous Ivy League institution of racial profiling in its admissions policies. Students for Fair Admissions says Harvard limits the number of Asian Americans it admits while giving preference to other races, according to the Project on Fair Representation.

Thai radio host jailed for royal defamation

AFP, Bangkok
A Thai radio show host has been jailed for five years for royal defamation, his lawyer said yesterday, one of the first sentences passed by a military court for breaching the draconian law since a May coup. Kathawut, 59, who presents an online radio show from overseas, was arrested on his return to Thailand in June for defaming the monarchy on his programme, according to his lawyer.

Blast hits Pak school bus; 2 killed

AFP, Peshawar
An 11-year-old boy died in a bomb attack on a school bus in a northwestern Pakistani tribal area, which also killed the driver, officials said yesterday. The bombing took place in the Nisti Kot area of the Upper Kurram tribal district. A seven-year-old girl was also wounded, police said, adding that no group had come forward to immediately claim responsibility for the attack.

US State Department faced cyber breach

AFP, Washington
The US State Department said Monday it shut down its unclassified computer network over the weekend after evidence emerged that it could have been hacked. The State Department had initially said in an email late Friday that the shutdown came as scheduled routine maintenance to its main unclassified network.

Mali places 600 under Ebola surveillance

AFP, Bamako
Fearful of a surge of Ebola cases, Mali placed nearly 600 people under surveillance, as the country battles to contain the spread of the deadly tropical virus. Mali has been scrambling to prevent a minor outbreak from turning into a major crisis after the deaths of a Guinean imam and the Malian nurse who treated him in the capital Bamako.

'Godman' supporters, cops clash in India

AFP, New Delhi
Hundreds of armed supporters of a controversial guru yesterday clashed with baton-wielding police who tried to storm his fortified ashram and arrest him in Hisar city in northern India, officers said. More than 200 people were injured in the clashes. The guru, 63-year-old Rampal Maharaj, has repeatedly defied court orders to appear to answer charges of conspiracy to murder, inciting mobs and contempt of court, local media have reported.



An Ultra-orthodox Jewish man prays at the scene of an attack, by two Palestinians, on Israeli worshippers at a synagogue in the ultra-Orthodox Har Nof neighbourhood in Jerusalem, yesterday. Top right, Israeli emergency services personnel clean the sidewalk at the scene of the attack; a masked Palestinian hands out sweets as he celebrates the attack during a rally in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. (Story on page 16)



Myanmar bars Suu Kyi from presidency

Rules out charter change before polls
AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's parliament speaker yesterday said the current junta-drafted constitution, which bars opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming president, cannot be changed before elections in November 2015. The comments by Shwe Mann came days after visiting US President Barack Obama backed Suu Kyi's attempts to change the charter.

The speaker said a nationwide referendum would be held next May on constitutional changes which are currently being thrashed out amid heated debate in the legislature. "We cannot perform constitutional amendments straight after the referendum," Shwe Mann told reporters in the capital Naypyidaw, adding it was "impossible to change (the charter) at this time" because of the scope of the likely changes.

On Monday the powerful military voiced strong opposition to significant changes to the constitution, including clause 59f which is widely thought to have been written specifically to thwart Suu Kyi. Legislators will choose a new president after the general election next November.

But the veteran democracy campaigner cannot stand for the top post because the constitution bans those with a foreign spouse or children. Her late husband and two sons are British. Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party are expected to make big gains at the polls -- the first general election they have fought since they swept 1990 polls. The then-junta ignored the result.

West restarting cold war

Says Putin as Nato sees 'very serious' Russian military build-up in Ukraine

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE
Russian leader Vladimir Putin has suggested to a German interviewer that the west is provoking Russia into a new cold war.

The statement came as Nato yesterday warned of a "very serious" build-up of Russian soldiers and weapons inside Ukraine and on its border as Germany's foreign minister urged Kiev and Moscow to respect a tattered peace plan.

Asked whether the accusatory rhetoric between Moscow and Washington and a noticeable increase in Russian displays of military strength near western countries points to a new cold war, Putin said two rounds of Nato expansion in central and eastern Europe had been "significant geopolitical game changers" that forced Russia to respond.

Moscow resumed strategic aviation flights abroad several years ago in response to US nuclear bomber flights to areas near Russia that had continued after the cold war, he added.

"Nato and the United States have military bases scattered all over the globe, including in areas close to our borders, and their number is growing," Putin said. "Moreover, just recently it was decided to deploy special opera-

tions forces, again in close proximity to our borders. You have mentioned various [Russian] exercises, flights, ship movements and so on. Is all of this going on? Yes, it is indeed."

Putin has previously been accused by western leaders of fanning cold war-style tensions, most recently by the Australian prime minister, Tony Abbott, who said he told Putin at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Beijing last week that Russia



separatists and deployed troops to eastern Ukraine, as Nato and Kiev have argued. "Nowadays people who wage a fight and consider it righteous will always get weapons," he said, blaming the west for supporting the government forces' use of ballistic missiles.

"You want the Ukrainian central authorities to annihilate everyone there in eastern Ukraine," Putin said. "Is that what you want? We certainly

don't. And we won't let it happen." In Brussels, Nato's head Jens Stoltenberg said there was a "very serious build-up" of troops, artillery and air defence systems inside Ukraine and on the Russian side of the border as he arrived to meet European Union defence ministers in Brussels.

At the same time, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met Ukraine's pro-Western leaders, before crunch talks later Tuesday in Moscow with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

The meeting will be the first by a senior European minister since July. Germany is playing the lead role in mediating the crisis with Russia.

On the ground, Ukraine's military said Tuesday that fresh clashes over the past 24 hours between government forces and rebels killed six of its soldiers.

IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL Final round of talks begins

AFP, Vienna

Iran's foreign minister yesterday insisted a nuclear deal remained possible as he arrived for a final round of talks with world powers, with differences still wide just six days before a deadline to strike an agreement.

But Mohammad Javad Zarif warned that an accord would only happen if the other side -- the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany -- refrained from making "excessive demands".

"A deal is still possible," Zarif was quoted by Iranian media as saying after landing at Vienna airport.

"If, because of excessive demands by the other side, we don't get a result, then the world will understand that the Islamic Republic sought a solution, a compromise and a constructive agreement and that it will not renounce its rights and the greatness of the nation."

The mammoth accord being sought by Monday's deadline, after months of negotiations, is aimed at easing fears that Tehran might develop nuclear weapons under the guise of civilian activities.

It could consign to history a 12-year standoff over Iran's atomic programme, silence talk of war and help normalise Iran's relations with the West after 35 years of mistrust and antagonism.

It could also boost Iran's economy, improve the lives of ordinary Iranians and mark a rare foreign policy success for US President Barack Obama, five years after he offered Tehran an "outstretched hand".

Japan PM calls snap election

AFP, Tokyo

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Tuesday he was calling a snap election and delaying an expected sales tax rise after figures showed Japan was in recession.

Less than two years after he swept to power pledging to reinvigorate the flagging economy, Abe will go to the polls -- probably in the middle of next month -- telling voters that more needs to be done to fix years of growth-sapping price declines.

"I will dissolve the lower chamber on (November) 21st," Abe told a news conference. He did not give a date for the election, which was not due until 2016, but the media consensus is that it will be Sunday, December 14.

Commentators across the spectrum agree that Abe, who enjoys approval ratings of around 50 percent, is likely to stroll home in the popular vote. They point out that the premier's real target is rivals within his own fractious LDP.

The thinking goes that as he faces a three-yearly party leadership election next September, he could stamp his authority over the grouping by resetting the clock now.



A demonstrator holds a sign as he lays on the ground during a protest of the shooting death of Michael Brown by a Ferguson police officer in St. Louis, Missouri. The governor of the US state of Missouri declared a state of emergency Monday fearing more violence and activated the National Guard ahead of a grand jury decision in the case of a black teenager shot and killed by a white police officer.



Mamata ready to float secular front with Congress, Left

TNN, Kolkata

Her pullout from the UPA government at the Indian Centre two years ago in September 2012, didn't come in the way of Mamata Banerjee throwing her weight behind Congress president Sonia Gandhi as she stressed the "compelling need for secularism" at the opening of a two-day seminar to mark the 125th birth anniversary of the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Mamata is also ready to break bread with arch rival Left on the issue as hinted earlier.

"Why not? This is not a matter of West Bengal. It's a national issue. We have our ideological differences. Yet we can come together to float an anti-communal front. It can be a platform to fight communalism. I have respect for dharma gurus. But I don't support danga (riot) gurus. All political parties should come together on this issue. Even BJP can join this platform because the party is in the ruling now, and I believe it doesn't want riots," the West Bengal chief minister said.

Mamata's attending the Congress seminar, talking to Left leaders and paying a visit to Advani's residence set off speculation in political circles. The chief minister, however, doesn't want people to read more into it. She added that Congress should take a back seat for the moment and allow regional parties to take the lead.

Want to be a cop? Keep virginity

'Virginity tests' for Indonesia cop recruits trigger row

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Female recruits hoping to join Indonesia's police force are forced to undergo two-finger "virginity tests", a rights group has found, a practice that leaves the women traumatised, humiliated and in pain.

The test is listed publicly as a requirement to enter the force and performed as part of the chief of police's health inspection guidelines for new candidates, which requires women to complete an "obstetrics and gynaecology" exam.

While female recruits are also expected to be single and not marry until they have been in the force for a few years, Indonesia's national police website claims they must also undergo virginity tests in addition to general medical and physical examinations, with the added warning: "So all women who want to become policewomen should keep their virginity."

The practice contravenes Indonesia's national police principles as well as international human rights policy, says Human Rights Watch (HRW), which interviewed female police recruits and serving female officers across six cities. While women who "failed" the test were



not necessarily prevented from entering the force, all of those interviewed said the examination was painful and traumatic and described the practice as widespread.

"Entering the virginity test examination room was really upsetting," one interviewee said. "I feared that after they performed the test I would not be a virgin anymore. They inserted two fingers with gel ... it really hurt. My friend even fainted."

Parts of HK main protest camp cleared

AFP, Hong Kong

Authorities yesterday cleared part of Hong Kong's main pro-democracy protest camp, facing no resistance as they launched the first of several planned evictions to reopen roads blocked for nearly two months.

Demonstrators have been camped on three major thoroughfares since Sept 28 demanding free leadership elections for the semi-autonomous Chinese city, but public support has ebbed as the weeks pass with little progress.

The operation, which took place under the watch of a gaggle of protesters and a huge scrum of journalists, came after the owners of the CITIC Tower office block won a court injunction ordering that protesters clear its immediate vicinity.

'Indo-Pak proxy war looming'

AFP, Karachi

The departure of Nato combat forces from Afghanistan could push India and Pakistan towards a proxy war in the troubled state, Pakistan's former military ruler General Pervez Musharraf warned in an interview with AFP.

As Pakistan's ruler, Musharraf was a key US ally in its "war on terror", but he now lives under tight security in his Karachi home, facing Taliban death threats and a litany of criminal cases dating back to his near decade-long rule that ended in 2008.

The 71-year-old praised new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who made his first official trip to Pakistan last week in a bid to reset fractious ties with Islamabad.

Nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan have long accused each other of using proxy forces to try to gain influence in Afghanistan. While India has tried to gain traction with the Tajik ethnic group of the north, Pakistan has sought to use its leverage with the Pashtuns of the country's south and east. "If Indians are using some elements of the ethnic entities in Afghanistan, then Pakistan will use its own support for ethnic elements," Musharraf said. "So we are initiating a proxy war in Afghanistan. This must be avoided."

