

# NEWSIN brief

## Shebab executes 28 in Kenya bus attack

AFP, Garissa

Somalia's Shebab Islamists yesterday ambushed a bus in Kenya, killing 28 non-Muslim passengers in what they said was a revenge attack for police raids on mosques in the troubled port city of Mombasa. Some 60 passengers on board were ordered off the vehicle, and the gunmen only killed the non-Muslims.

## HRW says Israeli house demolitions a war crime

AFP, Jerusalem

Human Rights Watch yesterday called on Israel to stop razing the homes of Palestinians accused of attacking Israelis, saying the practice can constitute a war crime. The demolitions have long been used as a deterrent punishment in the occupied West Bank, but rights group have slammed it as collective punishment measure.

## 550 Germans joined ISIS in Syria, Iraq

AFP, Frankfurt

At least 550 Germans have left their home country to fight alongside jihadists in Syria and Iraq, Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said. He said authorities are keeping a close watch on some 230 more people who are considered potential threats on German soil.

## Obama telephones Pakistan premier

AFP, Islamabad

US President Barack Obama telephoned Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to discuss the "evolving situation" in the region, the Pakistani foreign ministry said. Obama informed Sharif of his forthcoming trip to India and said he would visit Pakistan as soon as the situation normalises in the country.

## Americans urged to stop wasting food

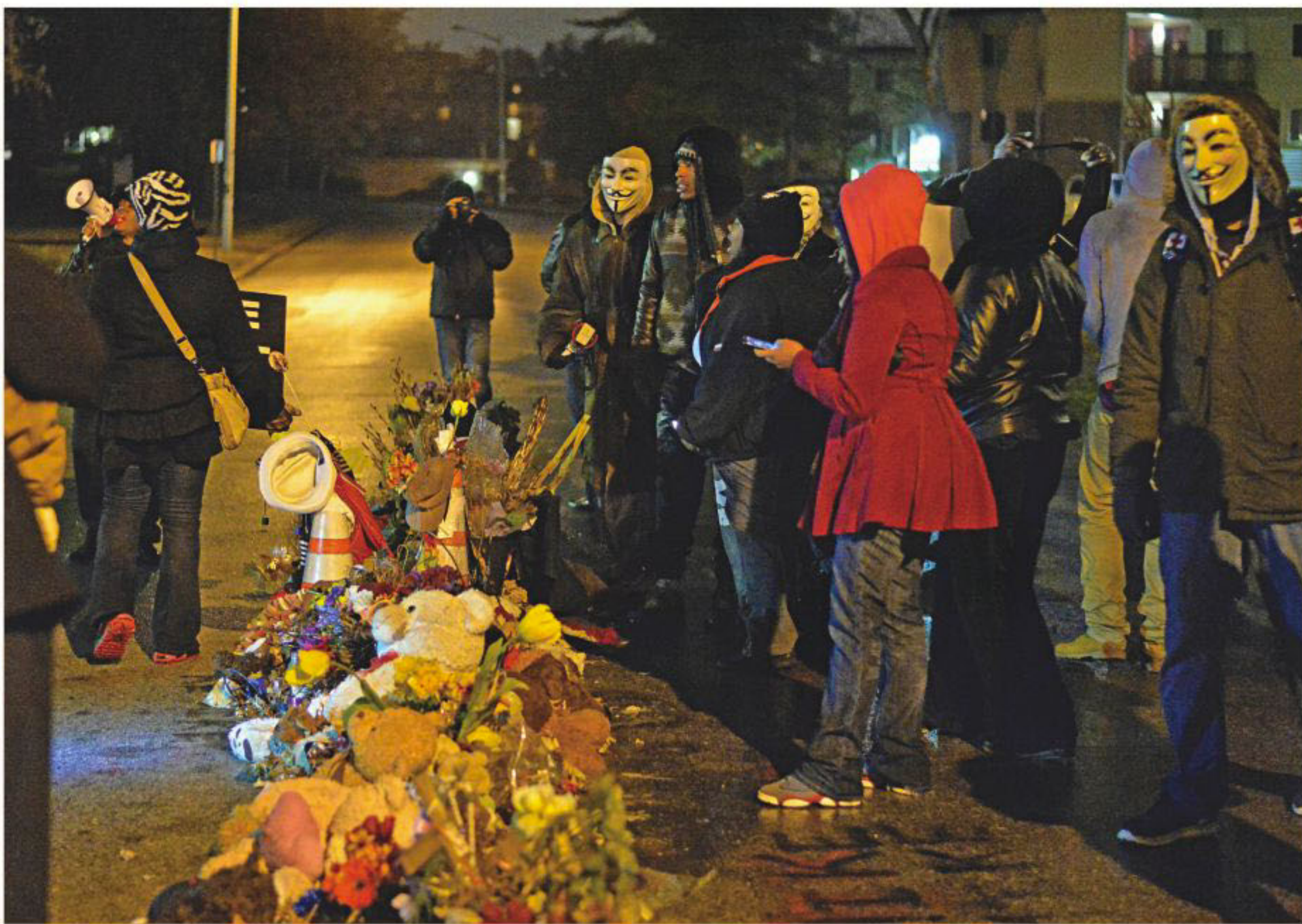
AFP, Washington

In the run-up to Thanksgiving, a holiday to celebrate bountiful harvests, Americans are being urged to stop wasting food so much. Some 34 million pounds of food is thrown away in the United States every year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said Friday. That represents 21 percent of all food produced, harvested and purchased -- food that is worth an estimated \$1.3 billion, at a time when one in six Americans face hunger.

## India invites bids for \$2.4b artillery contract

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday invited bids for a \$2.4-billion artillery deal while deferring a decision on acquiring 106 Swiss Pilatus aircraft for fighter pilot training. The bid for 814 mounted guns is the first big artillery tender in nearly three decades since the scandal-hit Swedish Bofors guns deal in 1987.



These photos show activists protest the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in St Louis, Missouri. Brown, who was black, was killed by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, on August 9. US President Barack Obama has called for calm as a grand jury is expected to decide this month if Wilson should be charged.



PHOTO: AFP



## Ebola outbreak can be ended in 2015: UN

BBC ONLINE

The deadly Ebola outbreak can be ended "by the middle of next year" if the world speeds up its response, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said.

But he warned that although the rate of new cases was slowing in parts of West Africa, Mali - where six people have died - was now of deep concern.

And the head of the UN Ebola mission, Anthony Banbury, said the world was "far away" from beating the virus.

Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia have been worst hit by the Ebola outbreak. More than 5,400 people have died in those three countries, along with a handful of others in Nigeria, Mali, Spain and the US.

In a separate development, Liberian police said all the country's beaches would be closed from 29 November until Liberia was declared free of Ebola.

In a statement, the police said anyone using the beach in violation of the order would be prosecuted.

Speaking at a meeting in Washington with officials from the World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ban said: "If we continue to accelerate our response, we can contain and end the outbreak by the middle of next year."

He said that so far results in the international effort to tackle Ebola remained uneven, stressing that many more health workers were needed in the worst-hit countries in West Africa.

"Our end game is not near. We must get to zero cases. Ebola is not a disease where you can leave a few cases and say you've done enough."

# West seeking regime Change in Russia

Accuses Moscow as Kiev declares joining Nato a priority

AFP, Kiev

Russia yesterday accused the West of seeking regime change in Moscow, raising tensions over the conflict in Ukraine in the worst crisis in relations since the end of the Cold War.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke out against Western sanctions on Russia after US Vice President Joe Biden hinted Friday at possible further measures over its "unacceptable" role in the former Soviet state.

Kiev's defence minister charged yesterday that there were 7,500 Russian troops in eastern Ukraine, although Russia denies claims that it provides military support to pro-Moscow separatists locked in conflict with government forces.

The allegations came after Ukraine's new coalition declared that joining Nato was a priority, stipulating that a law be passed by

the end of the year confirming the intention to push for membership.

The five-party coalition, agreed on Friday following October elections, features the groupings of President Petro Poroshenko, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and former premier Yulia Tymoshenko.

"The West is showing unam-



biguously that they do not want to force (Russia) to change policy, they want to achieve a change of regime," Lavrov told a forum of political analysts in Moscow.

"Now public figures in Western countries are saying that it's necessary to introduce sanctions that would destroy the economy and rouse public pro-

tests," he added in comments cited by TASS news agency.

The United States and European Union have imposed several rounds of sanctions on Moscow over Ukraine targeting the key energy, defence and finance sectors. These have sent the ruble into freefall and inflation soaring.

On a visit to Kiev on Friday, Biden accused Russia of failing to honour a peace agreement signed in September, which includes a tattered ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

"So long as that continues, Russia will face rising costs, greater isolation," Biden added.

Some 4,300 people have been killed in the conflict in seven months, according to the United Nations. Nearly 1,000 have died since the ceasefire came into effect.

Experts play down Ukraine's chances of joining Nato anytime soon.

## IRAN NUKE DEAL → 1 DAYS TO GO

## 'Big gap' remains as frantic talks enters endgame

AFP, Vienna

Six world powers and Iran yesterday groped for ways to bridge wide gaps in marathon nuclear negotiations two days ahead of a deadline.

At stake in the Austrian capital Vienna is a historic deal in which Iran would curb its nuclear activities in exchange for broad relief from years of heavy international economic sanctions.

It could end a 12-year standoff with the West that has even raised the threat of Israeli military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.

US Secretary of State John Kerry was consulting by phone with his international partners as well as colleagues back in the United States, aides reported, after Washington said "serious gaps" remained in the talks.

Iranian sources said Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif would meet Kerry later for a fourth round of talks here in three days, but there was no immediate confirmation of this from the US

State Department.

"The gap remains big...There now needs to be a political decision," an Iranian source told AFP on condition of anonymity, putting the onus on the world powers.

The United States also said hurdles remained high.

"We are running against the clock. Obviously, the deadline is Monday, and our folks there are working furiously to meet it... Serious gaps do remain," White House spokesman Eric Schultz said in Washington.

But he warned Washington would not settle for a bad deal.

The gaps were so wide that Britain and Iran have raised the possibility that a final deal would not be reached by Monday's deadline, and that the negotiations could be extended.

The United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany have been locked in talks with Iran since February to turn an interim accord reached a year ago into a lasting agreement by November 24.

## India to offer online visas to 45 countries

TNN, New Delhi

India will offer online visa facilities for 45 countries including US, Australia, Germany, Israel, Japan, UAE, Palestine, Jordan, Thailand, Singapore and Russia. The facility will be announced on November 27 by the ministries of home affairs and tourism.

Countries that already have visa on arrival and will be able to apply under the electronic travel authorization scheme include Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines, Laos and South Korea. Once implemented ETA will allow foreign travelers to apply for a visa and receive an online confirmation within three to five working days. ETA will be available for a 30 day period from the date of the tourist's arrival in India. To get the visa, they would need to apply in the designated website along with the required fees.

The countries that are unlikely to be on the list include SAARC and countries that are on "prior reference" list which include Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Afghanistan.



Winner of the 2014 World Muslimah Awards Fatma Ben Guefrache of Tunisia gives a victory sign in Yogyakarta, yesterday. An eclectic mix of women from around the world competed in the final of a pageant exclusively for Muslims in Indonesia on November 21, seen as a riposte to Western beauty contests. Tarannum Taslima of Bangladesh is pictured left in the photo.

# Obama defends US immigration plan

Urges critics to 'pass a bill', blasts Boehner

REUTERS, Washington

President Barack Obama defended his decision to bypass Congress and overhaul US immigration policy on his own on Friday, saying he was forced to act because House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner would not let legislation come to a vote.

With many Americans skeptical of his decision to bypass Congress and impose an immigration overhaul unilaterally, Obama attempted to rally support for his move in a speech at a Las Vegas high school, saying illegal immigrants need a chance to come out of the shadows.

He engaged in a cross-country debate with Boehner, the top US Republican, who accused Obama in Washington of

sabotaging chances for bipartisan legislation and vowed to lead a fight to block his executive actions.

In the summer of 2013, the Democratic-run Senate passed compromise immigration legislation but the bill died in the Republican-controlled House. Obama said he waited to see if the House would ever pass the legislation, but Boehner would not let it come to a vote.

"I told John Boehner, 'I'll wash your car, walk your dog, whatever you need to do, just call the bill,'" Obama said. "And he didn't do it."

To those lawmakers who feel he overstepped his constitutional authority, Obama said his message to them is: "Pass the bill."

Obama's move threatens to herald a new round of partisan gridlock in Washington as Republicans who will control both chambers of Congress in January react with scorn to his decision.

Republicans remain split on the best course of resistance to Obama's action easing the threat of deportation for some 4.7 million undocumented immigrants. Conservative groups were already pulling together legal strategies to challenge it.

"With this action, the president has chosen to deliberately sabotage any chance of enacting bipartisan reforms that he claims to seek. And as I told the president yesterday, he's damaging the presidency itself," Boehner told reporters.

Obama received a rousing welcome from a largely Latino audience at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas, the same place he visited just after beginning his second term in 2013, when he laid out his principles for immigration reform.

"Si se puede," they chanted.

Before getting off Air Force One shortly after landing in Las Vegas, Obama signed two presidential memoranda to set in motion part of the biggest US immigration changes in a decade.

Just hours after his speech on Thursday night, Republicans launched a long-threatened lawsuit against the administration on another topic, accusing it of abusing executive authority through implementation of the president's "Obamacare" health reform law.

# Amnesty launches tool to detect govt snooping

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A high-profile human rights organisation has released a tool to help journalists and activists avoid government internet snooping.

Amnesty International said the program, called Detekt, would help expose spyware programs, some of which are used by governments to monitor journalists and activists.

The program was developed by security researcher Claudio Guarnieri and is being launched in conjunction with the other NGOs Digitale Gesellschaft, Electronic Frontier Foundation and Privacy International.

Marek Marczynski, Head of Military, Security and Police at Amnesty International, said governments around the world

were using "cowardly methods" to keep attacks on human rights abuses under wraps.

"Governments are increasingly using dangerous and sophisticated technology that allows them to read activists and journalists' private emails and remotely turn on their computer's camera or microphone to secretly record their activities," he said. "They use the technology in a cowardly attempt to prevent abuses from being exposed."

The software can detect bugs designed to monitor Skype conversations, which has been used in the past in countries with poor human rights records. The tool is freely available on the internet. It alerts its users to the fact they are being spied on, giving them the chance to take precautions.



## Plague outbreak kills 40 in Madagascar

AFP, Geneva

An outbreak of plague has killed 40 people in Madagascar, the World Health Organization said, warning that the disease could spread rapidly in the country's densely populated capital Antananarivo.

The first victim was identified on August 31 in a district to the west of the capital, and died three days later, the UN health agency said in a statement Friday.

By mid-November, some 119 plague cases had been confirmed, with two percent of them of the pneumonic strain -- one of the deadliest infectious diseases with a very high mortality rate.

Plague mostly affects rats and is spread by fleas, but humans can also contract the disease if they are bitten by an infected flea.

## SARADHA SCAM, CBI PROBE Mamata's woes deepen

TNN, Kolkata

Mamata Banerjee couldn't have expected her anti-Centre rhetoric in New Delhi to fizzle out so fast. The arrest of Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP Srinjoy Bose on Friday for the massive Saradha chit fund scandal has sowed panic in her ranks.

The trust deficit is spreading among the ranks fast. The question is how will Mamata tide over the rising no-confidence on her administration? Trinamool leaders would love to rubbish this as a media construct, far removed from ground reality. If that was so, BJP wouldn't have bagged 17% votes in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, leaving Trinamool lagging in many city wards. No wonder, Mamata sensed the public mood and proposed to go along with Congress and Left against what she calls the "dangagurus" (BJP).

Given the public mood, Mamata has her own compulsions. With her party's credibility getting a severe jolt in the Saradha scam, the Trinamool chief faces a challenge she never faced

before — keeping her flock together. This explains why she threw her weight behind Mukul Roy and Madan Mitra, two of her graft-tainted lawmakers, even after initially distancing herself from them. According to Trinamool insiders, Mamata was forced to give a clean chit to Mukul and Madan after she got the hint that as many as 20 Trinamool councillors in Kolkata Municipal Corporation are having other thoughts before civic polls sometime next year. Some of these councillors are already in touch with BJP and may change loyalties any day.

The desperation was showing in Mamata's speech on Friday. "When the incident took place what was your CBI doing, your Sebi doing and even RBI? Chit fund isn't within the state's ambit. Nowadays I see those who cheated people, like the Saradha Group who cheated people, are not getting back their money. Instead the focus is on who cheated Saradha," Mamata thundered at a party workers' conference in Kalyani.

