

NEWS IN brief

Lebanon holding ISIS chief's daughter

Lebanese authorities are holding a daughter and an ex-wife of the head of the ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the interior minister said. It was initially reported that a wife and son of the self-proclaimed "caliph" had been arrested. He said DNA tests showed that the girl was Baghdadi's child.

ICC issues deadline to finalise Kenyatta trial

The International Criminal Court on Wednesday gave prosecutors a final week either to strengthen or drop charges against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, saying a trial could not be postponed any longer. Kenyatta, 53, faces five charges of crimes against humanity for allegedly masterminding deadly post-poll violence in Kenya in 2007-08 in which more than 1,200 people died and 600,000 others were displaced.

FARC, Colombian govt resume peace talks

The FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government agreed Wednesday to resume peace talks that stalled over the kidnap of an army general, vowing to "de-escalate" the 50-year conflict. The next round of talks will take place in Cuba from December 10 to 17, the two sides said in a joint statement after.

School bus crash kills 5 children in India

Five children were killed yesterday when a school bus collided with a moving train at an unmanned railway crossing in northern India, local authorities said. Another 13 people, including the driver, have been taken to hospital for treatment after the crash in Uttar Pradesh state. Media reports said there were more than 20 primary school children in the bus when it crashed.



An Indian resident reacts as she sits among the charred remains of her home after a fire broke out in a makeshift settlement in Kolkata, yesterday. More than 120 homes and shops were destroyed in the blaze. The cause of the fire is not yet known, fire department officials said.

PHOTO: AFP

LONDON MEET ON AFGHANISTAN West renews it's commitments

Secretary of State John Kerry promised US and allied support for Afghanistan as the country's new leaders outlined reform plans yesterday, even as they struggled to bring peace while foreign combat forces withdraw. "We have a government in Kabul that merits our confidence," Kerry told an international conference in London with President Ashraf Ghani and chief executive officer Abdullah Abdullah. "They can be confident of the support of the international community," he said. The conference is not focused on new cash pledges but instead on providing a platform for Ghani and Abdullah, joined by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and British Prime Minister David Cameron. It comes after the two agreed to form a national unity government in September and as US-led foreign forces end a 13-year combat mission amid a spike in Taliban attacks against international targets in Kabul. Ghani wants to implement a national "strategy of self-reliance", including tackling corruption, improving security and governance plus boosting exports. Kerry praised Ghani and Abdullah for putting aside their own political differences in favour of creating a united vision for Afghanistan's development, following the presidency of Hamid Karzai, in whom Western confidence wore thin. "We are confident that the policies outlined today will result in a more stable, prosperous Afghanistan. This is really an extraordinary moment. It's a moment of transformation," Kerry said.

UN climate projects for poorest 'feared frozen'

Hundreds of United Nations-backed projects to help the world's poorest countries cope with the most urgent impacts of climate change have not been acted upon, the BBC has learnt. Many of these were proposed years ago and may have to be abandoned. Experts and officials from the world's 48 least developed countries say lack of funding is the main reason. They warn that a new long-term global climate defence plan may kick these projects further into the long grass. More than 500 such projects are listed in the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), which least developed countries had been preparing since 2001 under the UN climate convention. However, fewer than 100 of them have been actually implemented, leaving vulnerable communities in these countries exposed to known risks, experts have told the BBC. Scientists say poorest countries are the hardest hit by climate change impact. A recent report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CREED) found that the 10 worst weather- and water-related disasters happened primarily in least developed and developing countries. The events in these countries have killed

nearly 1.4 million people between 1970 and 2012 - around 70 percent of such deaths globally. LDCs require more than \$2bn to complete the 500 or more climate adaptation projects they have identified, but not even \$900m has been made available to the fund so far. Poorest countries also fear they will have to compete with wealthier nations to get the necessary funding. The Green Climate Fund, a new interna-



tional climate financing mechanism under the UN climate convention, is expected to be one of the major funding sources for NAPAs. Donor countries have so far pledged nearly \$10bn (£6.25bn) for the fund while it aims to have \$100bn (£62.5bn) available by 2020.

BJP, Shiv Sena back together after row

The BJP and the Shiv Sena are back together in Maharashtra. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP announced yesterday that the Sena will join his government and that the two parties will also fight future elections together. "I urged the Shiv Sena to join the government... We have decided to run the government together," Mr Fadnavis said, ending days of tense negotiations and feuding. He was flanked by leaders of the Shiv Sena and his party. The 44-year-old chief minister said 12 Sena ministers would be sworn into his government, five of Cabinet rank and the rest ministers of state, tomorrow. Portfolios, he said, would be decided by this evening. There will be no Deputy Chief Minister, a Shiv Sena demand that held up talks for days. Maharashtra's Raj Bhavan has been informed that new ministers will take oath at 4 pm on Friday.

Xi's rise worrying China's neighbours: Obama

US President Barack Obama said on Wednesday Chinese President Xi Jinping had consolidated power faster than any Chinese leader in decades, raising human rights concerns and worrying China's neighbours. Obama, who met Xi last month in Beijing, told the Business Roundtable group of US chief executives that the Chinese leader had won respect in the short time since he had taken over. "He has consolidated power faster and more comprehensively than probably anybody since Deng Xiaoping," Obama said, referring to the man who led China from 1978 to 1992. "And everybody's been impressed by his... clout inside of China after only a year and a half or two years." But Obama said there were negative sides to Xi's rise, reports Reuters. "There are dangers in that. On issues of human rights, on issues of clamping down on dissent. He taps into a nationalism that worries his neighbors," Obama said, noting maritime disputes in the region. He also praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to shake up the "bureaucratic inertia" in India, less than a month after he described Prime Minister as a "man of action". "Modi has impressed me so far with his willingness to shake up the bureaucratic inertia inside of India. But that is a long-term project and we'll have to see how successful he is," Obama told the business roundtable, reports Times of India.



AGENCIES

India's 'hate speech' minister keeps job

India's new Hindu nationalist premier Narendra Modi on Thursday rejected angry calls to dismiss a government minister whose derogatory comment about religious minorities has caused uproar in parliament. India's upper house has been paralysed by opposition protests since Niranjana Jyoti told a crowd at a campaign rally on Monday to decide whether they wanted a government run by "the children of (Hindu god) Ram or the children of bastards". Jyoti, a junior minister in the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, has since apologised for the comment, seen as an attack on religious minorities in the majority-Hindu nation. But opposition parties have continued to demand her dismissal, and on Thursday Modi sought to stem the political fallout by urging lawmakers to accept her apology. "This minister is new, she has entered parliament for the first time (at the last election)... She has apologised," Modi said. "I request the House to continue with its work in the interests of the country."



'Bamboo up the backside' CPI's terror message drowns in Mamata's crass lingo

A controversy has erupted over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee allegedly using "bamboo" remark at a rally in Jalpaiguri on Wednesday. Mamata reportedly used the colloquial Bengali phrase to hit back at former Left Front rule of West Bengal accusing it having failed to do anything themselves and are now out to trip up her government. "Aren't you proud today that both Darjeeling and Jangalmahal are peaceful? They (the CPI-M) couldn't do it and now they are trying to give bamboo in the rear to those who managed to do something," Mamata was quoted by Indian newspapers yesterday as saying. "Bamboo grows in jungles and is used to make houses. The day the bamboo starts chasing them, they won't know what to do," she said in an apparent reference to the former CPI(M)-led coalition government her party Trinamool Congress voted out of power in May, 2011. Mamata was apparently reacting to CPI(M) leader Biman Bose who had at a rally held in Kolkata on Tuesday demanded that she be questioned by the Central Bureau of Investigation regarding the Saradha chit fund scam.

Anger boils in NYC

"Demonstrations and free speech are valuable contributions to debate, but violence and disorder are not only wrong -- they are counterproductive," he said. Wednesday's grand jury decision over Eric Garner's death came just days after a similar decision in Ferguson, Missouri sparked riots. The St Louis suburb had been the scene of protests and racial tensions since unarmed black teen Michael Brown was shot to death August 9 by a white police officer. In New York, police were deployed in force after the decision in the Garner case came down. There were angry scenes as thousands took to the streets, but no major violence. A series of protests converged into a large march down Broadway and eventually into Times Square, where demonstrators mixed with hundreds of tourists and reporters. Garner's death in July is one of a string of recent racially-charged incidents in

which white police officers have been accused of using unreasonable force or being too quick to fire at black suspects. Coupled with the death of a 12-year-old black boy who was gunned down by an Ohio police officer, they have reignited debate about relations between law enforcement and African Americans. An amateur video of the New York arrest shows Garner, a heavy-set man who suffered from asthma and had six children, gasping "I can't breathe, I can't breathe" as police officers held him to the ground. Attorney General Eric Holder said the US Justice Department will launch a federal civil rights investigation into the death. New York police officer Daniel Pantaleo could still face federal charges. He applied the chokehold on Garner during an arrest for selling untaxed cigarettes in the New York borough of Staten Island. Protesters in Times Square waved signs reading

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Psy stretches YouTube

Google, which owns YouTube, later told website The Verge that engineers "saw this coming a couple months ago and updated our systems to prepare for it". YouTube now uses a 64-bit integer for its video counter, which means videos have a maximum viewer count of 9.22 quintillion. Psy has yet to comment although news of YouTube's change was posted on his Facebook and Twitter pages. The second most-watched video on YouTube - Baby by Justin Bieber - lags behind Gangnam Style by more than a billion views.