



# Mubarak graft conviction overturned

Court orders retrial

An Egyptian appeals court yesterday overturned a three-year prison sentence against ousted strongman Hosni Mubarak on corruption charges and ordered a retrial in the sole case pending against him.

Supporters of the 86-year-old former leader broke into cheers and chanted "Long Live Justice!" as the court announced its decision.

In November, another court had dropped murder charges against Mubarak over the deaths of protesters during the 2011 uprising that ended his three decades of autocratic rule.

A lower court had handed down the jail sentence against Mubarak in May last year after convicting him of embezzling money earmarked for the maintenance of presidential palaces.

It had also given four-year jail sentences to the toppled leader's sons, Alaa and Gamal. Four other defendants in the graft case were acquitted last year.

The Court of Cassation did not specify whether Mubarak was a free man following its judgement.

But defence lawyer Farid al-Deeb told AFP that his client ought to go free as he "has already served" three years in detention, including the time he spent in custody awaiting trial.

# US vows to help Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

The US and Pakistan vowed yesterday to intensify a crackdown on militants hiding in lawless border areas, as top diplomat John Kerry urged renewed peace talks with India to strengthen regional stability.

Last month's shocking school massacre in Peshawar by the Pakistani Taliban triggered global outrage, and sharpened the focus on militant groups hiding in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region.

Islamabad began a full-scale offensive against Taliban and other militants in the North Waziristan tribal district in June, after ignoring US calls for action for years.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Pakistan's national security adviser Sartaj Aziz, Kerry said Pakistan deserved "enormous credit" for the operation.

"I emphasised that the US is committed to deepening our security relationship with Pakistan in order to eliminate threats in the border area and elsewhere," the US Secretary of State told reporters.

Pakistan executed seven militants yesterday, bringing to 16 the number hanged since December.

The attack was "a reminder of the



## Fight against TERROR

Kerry praises ongoing ops, pledges more support

Urges resumption of peace talks with India

Islamabad hangs seven more militants

serious risk of allowing extremists to find space, and be able to command that space and operate within it," Kerry said.

Earlier in strategic talks with a top Pakistani official, he said the operation in Waziristan had already led to "significant results".

Kerry later met senior Pakistani

military commanders at their headquarters in Rawalpindi to discuss joint military efforts and plans for greater intelligence-sharing.

Kerry warned that all terror groups -- such as the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network and the Lashkar-e-Taiba -- "continue to pose a threat not just to Pakistan and its neighbours but also to the United States and the world".

"Make no mistake the task is a difficult one and it is not done," Kerry said.

Aziz vowed yesterday that Pakistan would take action "without discrimination, against all groups" seen as spreading terror both in Pakistan and neighbouring countries, adding that the Haqqani network's infrastructure had been "totally destroyed" by the North Waziristan operation.

Kerry also stressed that Washington had what he called a "uniform concern about the region's stability", urging India and Pakistan to return to peace talks.

"This is the hardest kind of work. It means you have to put a lot of time and effort into overcoming historical mistrust and past events, enmities."

Recent exchanges of fire across the frontier known as the Line of Control (LoC) have killed more than two dozen civilians and forced thousands to flee their homes on both sides.

# Rajapakse denies coup bid

Pope arrives in Lanka; urges respect for human rights

Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapakse yesterday denied government allegations that he attempted a coup to remain in office after it became clear that he had lost last week's election.

In comments published on Twitter as Pope Francis landed on the island, Rajapakse insisted he had readily accepted "the people's verdict" in what was his first reaction to last Thursday's polls.

Top aides of new President Maithripala Sirisena have alleged the veteran strongman tried to cling to power in the early hours of Friday by urging the island's army and police chiefs to deploy the security forces.

But Rajapakse wrote: "I deny in all possible terms reports of attempts to use the military to influence election results."

"I accepted the outcome long before the final official results were released and congratulated the new president," he said.

The 69-year-old, who came to power in a 2005 presidential election, added that he had "always bowed down to the people's verdict".

Sirisena's new administration has

pledged to make an investigation into what it has called "the coup and conspiracy" one of its top priorities and ordered the sacking of hundreds of Rajapakse-appointed officials.

Although the military has not confirmed an approach from Rajapakse's camp in the hours before the final results were announced, Sirisena's top lieutenants have said there was clear evidence of a conspiracy.

Any sustained bid by Rajapakse to cling to power would have thrown a huge question mark over the visit by Pope Francis who called for human rights to be respected on the island as he flew into Colombo yesterday.

While Sirisena's camp have said that the army and police chiefs resisted the pressure from Rajapakse to launch a coup, leading lawyers have accused the country's Chief Justice Mohan Peiris of being party to a plot.

Lawyers have been demanding the resignation of Peiris, a former advisor to Rajapakse who was appointed chief justice after the controversial impeachment of his predecessor Shirani Bandaranayake in January 2013.



Sympathizers of German right-wing populist movement PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) hold a poster featuring German Chancellor Angela Merkel wearing a head scarf during their twelfth march in Dresden, eastern Germany on Monday. Chancellor Angela Merkel (top right) yesterday joined a Muslim community rally (bottom right) to promote tolerance, condemn the jihadist attacks in Paris and send a rebuke to a growing German anti-Islamic movement.



# Cuba frees all 53 political prisoners

AFP, Washington

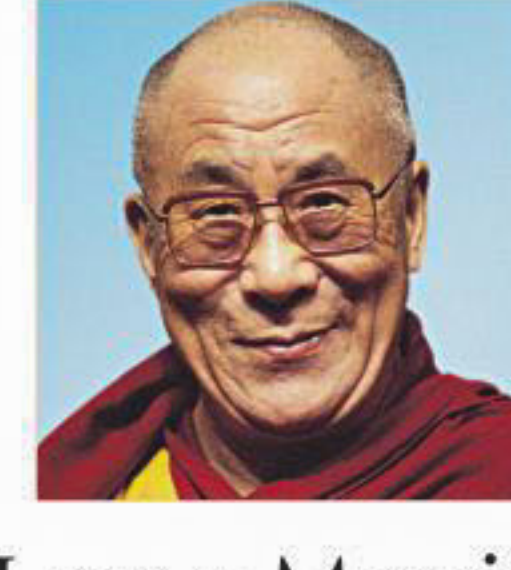
Cuba has released all 53 of the political prisoners it agreed to free in last month's normalization deal with the United States, the US State Department said Monday.

News of the release came as US officials prepare to travel to Havana next week for talks to lay the foundation for a historic rapprochement after a half-century of Cold War enmity.

"We welcome this very positive development and are pleased that the Cuban government followed through on this commitment," State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said.

A senior administration official said earlier that the US Interests Section in Havana had verified the releases. The full list of 53 names was released Monday by the offices of several US lawmakers.

Dissident leaders said late last week that Cuba had released more than 40 dissidents by late Friday, as part of last month's historic bilateral rapprochement in which Cuba agreed to free dozens of political prisoners as part of the deal to end a five-decade standoff with the US.



# I am a Marxist

Says Dalai Lama

Describing himself as a Marxist, Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama yesterday said many Marxist leaders have now become capitalists in thinking.

"As far as social-economic theory is concerned, I am still a Marxist," the spiritual leader said adding that he admires Marxism because of its focus on reducing gap between the rich and the poor.

"Many Marxist leaders are now capitalists in their thinking. It depends on their motivation, thinking, wider perspective," the spiritual leader said during a lecture on world peace in Presidency University.

"In capitalist countries, there is an increasing gap between the rich and the poor. In Marxism, there is emphasis on equal distribution. That is very crucial to me," he said.

He blamed discrimination against women and those from low-castes for hampering peace in India, but said, "Muslims in India are living more safely than the Shias of Pakistan."

The 14th Dalai Lama appealed to those under the age of 30 to make the 21st century as the 'century of peace'.

# NEWS IN brief

## Toxic alcohol kills 29 in India's UP

BBC ONLINE

At least 29 people have been killed after consuming toxic alcohol in India's Uttar Pradesh state, police said. Residents of a number of villages in Lucknow and Unnao districts fell ill after drinking the alcohol. More than 100 people are being treated in hospital, with fears the death toll could rise.

## US Metro smoke kills 1

AFP, Washington

A woman died and dozens of people were injured after thick smoke, believed to be caused by electric malfunction, filled a subway tunnel in the US capital Monday during the evening rush hour, officials said.

Washington Emergency Medical Services said that 84 people were taken to the hospital with "various injuries" and that one firefighter was also injured.

## Ukraine clashes kill 11 after talks failure

AFP, Donetsk

At least eleven Ukrainian civilians were killed and more than a dozen wounded yesterday when a long-range Grad rocket apparently fired by pro-Russian insurgents hit a intercity bus. The upsurge in violence came as the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France ended a meeting Monday without being able to set a date for a hoped-for peace summit on ending the conflict.

## ISIS hacks US military's Twitter account

BBC ONLINE

The Twitter and YouTube accounts of the US military command were suspended for a few hours after being hacked by a group claiming to back Islamic State. Centcom said it was "cyber-vandalism" and not a serious data breach. In a statement, it said there was no operational impact and no classified information was posted.

# 'Madness has no religion'

Says Hollande as French terror victims buried in Israel

President Francois Hollande yesterday vowed that France would "never yield" to terror in an emotional tribute to three police officers shot dead in an Islamist killing spree, as four Jews gunned down in the attacks were buried in Israel.

Home to Europe's largest Jewish and Muslim communities, France was shaken to the core by its bloodiest attacks in decades, which began when gunmen opened fire at the Charlie Hebdo editorial meeting in its Paris offices on Wednesday and ended in a bloody hostage drama at a Jewish supermarket two days later.

Seventeen people, including journalists, policemen, a black policewoman, Muslims and Jews lost their lives. In an historic show of solidarity, nearly four million people marched around the country on Sunday, and the outpouring of shock and grief continued yesterday as several victims were buried.

In Paris, the Marseillaise anthem rang out under grey skies as a grim-faced Hollande laid the country's highest decoration, the Legion d'honneur, on to the coffins of three fallen police officers draped in the red, white and blue flag.

"Our great and beautiful France will never break, will never yield, never bend" in the face of the Islamist threat that is "still there, inside and outside" the country, said Hollande, surrounded by weeping families and uniformed colleagues.

He added: "Madness has no religion, it has the face of hate, a hatred for all that France represents."

In Israel, thousands of mourners gathered at a cemetery for the funeral of Tunisian national Yoav Hattab, 22, and French citizens Philippe Braham, 45, Yohan Cohen, 23, and Francois-Michel Saada, 64, who were killed at the kosher supermarket.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told mourners that world leaders were "starting to understand" the threat of Islamic extremism.

Meanwhile, the satirical Charlie Hebdo magazine unveiled the cover of its latest edition showing a weeping Prophet Mohammed under the banner "All is forgiven".

Egypt slammed the provocative cover which was republished across Europe, in Australia and Brazil, but French Muslim groups urged their communities to "stay calm and avoid emotive reactions" to the depiction of Mohammad, which many see as sacrilegious.

# 'West facing payback for colonialism'

The religious and cultural tensions the West faces are "payback" for slavery and colonialism, a Chinese state-run newspaper said yesterday in the wake of the Islamist attack on Charlie Hebdo magazine.

The editorial in the Global Times newspaper -- which often takes a nationalistic tone -- dismissed the weekend's huge marches in Paris and elsewhere as "painkillers" that cannot halt the intensifying "clash of civilisations".

The article comes amid a global show of support for the satirical French weekly, whose Paris office last week was stormed by Islamist gunmen in an attack that left 12 people dead.

"Voices say that what Western developed societies have gone through is payback as it is their historical acts of slavery and colonialism which led to their current demographic structures," the newspaper, which is close to China's ruling Communist Party, said.

"The immigrant issue has bred ultra-extremist right-wingers in Europe, making conflicts largely insoluble," it continued.

"When calm is restored, if the magazine holds on to its stance on Islam, it will put the French government in a difficult position and it will become a symbol of a clash of civilisations in Europe," it continued.

In the days since the Paris attack, Beijing has both condemned terrorism and argued that Charlie Hebdo's provocative cartoons were an invitation to violence. In a commentary Monday, the official Xinhua news agency said that the incidents in Paris "should not be simplified as attacks on press freedom, for even the freedom itself has its limits, which does not include insulting, sneering or taunting other people's religion or beliefs".

# Regular naps are 'key to learning'

BBC ONLINE

The key to learning and memory in early life is a lengthy nap, say scientists.

Trials with 216 babies up to 12 months old indicated they were unable to remember new tasks if they did not have a lengthy sleep soon afterwards.

The University of Sheffield team suggested the best time to learn may be just before sleep and emphasised the importance of reading at bedtime.

Experts said sleep may be much more important in early years than at other ages. People spend more of their time asleep as babies than at any other point in their lives. Half the babies slept within four hours of learning, while the rest either had no sleep or napped for fewer than 30 minutes.

The next day, the babies were encouraged to repeat what they had been taught. The results, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, showed "sleeping like a baby" was vital for learning.



# Cameroon kills 143 Boko Haram militants

AFP, Yaounde

The Cameroonian army killed 143 Boko Haram fighters who attacked a military base in the northern town of Kolofata on Monday, in what the government said was the militants' heaviest loss yet on its territory.

One Cameroonian soldier also lost his life in the clashes, officials said. The toll was "the heaviest loss yet" suffered by Boko Haram on Cameroonian soil, an official said, and comes at a time of fears of increased cross-border raids by the Nigeria-based group into Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

The spokesman said the attack began in the early hours when "several hundred" Islamist fighters took advantage of thick fog to cross over from Nigeria and tried to storm the town's military base, where an elite army unit is stationed.

# Divers recover AirAsia cockpit voice recorder

AFP, Pangkalan Bun

Indonesian divers yesterday retrieved the cockpit voice recorder from the wreckage of an AirAsia plane that crashed into the Java Sea as the airline's boss vowed to overcome the "toughest times" he has known.

It came a day after the plane's other black box, the flight data recorder, was recovered.

The devices should give investigators vital information about what caused the accident.

Flight QZ8501 went down on December 28 in stormy weather as it flew from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore with 162 people on board. Just 48 bodies have so far been recovered, with many believed to be in the main section of the fuselage, which has not yet been found.

Indonesia's meteorological agency has said bad weather likely caused the Airbus A320-200 to crash but a definitive answer is impossible without the data recorders. The device had been about 32 metres (under water, buried under wreckage. It was not far from the first black box but took longer to retrieve as it was trapped under the remains of the aircraft. The device was brought to Pangkalan Bun town, the search headquarters, before being transferred to a plane and flown to Jakarta. Officials say both black boxes are in good condition. The flight data recorder holds a wealth of information on many of the plane's instruments, while the cockpit voice recorder stores radio transmissions and sounds in the cockpit. Both are located near the rear of the plane and designed to survive underwater. The transport committee said the black boxes would undergo a lengthy analysis in the capital after the data is downloaded, which would take about a week. The committee has said a preliminary report on the accident will be produced within a month, and a final report after a year.

