

# NEWSIN brief

## Ukraine Crisis: Wave of fighting kills 11

AFP, Kiev  
Fierce fighting in east Ukraine has killed at least 11 people over the past 24 hours, officials yesterday, as a new round of violence threatened all-out conflict between government forces and pro-Russian rebels. Fierce fighting broke out on Thursday around the Donetsk airport. After an overnight lull, there were reports of further intense clashes yesterday.

## Pak clashes over Charlie Hebdo hurt 3

AFP, Karachi  
At least three people were injured yesterday in clashes between anti-Charlie Hebdo protesters and police outside the French consulate in Pakistan's Karachi, officials said, including an AFP photographer who was shot in the back. The protest by the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami religious party was one of several staged across Pakistan by Islamist groups.

## HK protests leaders released after arrest

BBC ONLINE  
Four student leaders involved in last year's pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong have been freed without charge after they reported to a police station over their role in the demonstrations. The students, including Joshua Wong, were called in on suspicion of participating in illegal gatherings. They were placed under investigation and told they could still be charged.

## Pranab's daughter to contest Delhi polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi  
Indian President Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmishtha is all set to make her electoral battle debut in the Indian capital as a candidate of main opposition Congress party. She is among the 15 candidates announced by Congress in its third list of candidates for Delhi Assembly polls to be held on February 7. Sharmishtha will contest from the prestigious Greater Kailash constituency in South Delhi.

## Suspected ISIS recruit arrested in Hyderabad

PTI, Hyderabad  
A techie was arrested for his alleged links with the terror outfit Islamic State by Telangana police at Hyderabad airport yesterday. According to police, Moinuddin, 22, was planning to join his partner, a UK national Nicky Joseph, and travel to Syria, the ISIS stronghold.



US Secretary of State John Kerry (C) and French Foreign Affairs minister Laurent Fabius lay a wreath of flower to pay tribute to the victims killed in the attack of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo yesterday at the entrance of the weekly newspaper office in Paris. Inset, French president François Hollande poses with Kerry prior to a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

PHOTO: AFP



## AIR ASIA TRAGEDY

### Bad weather halts rescue operations

AFP, Pangkalan Bun  
Indonesian divers yesterday again failed to reach the main body of an AirAsia plane that crashed into the sea last month with 162 people on board, as strong underwater currents hampered efforts. Flight QZ8501 went down in the Java Sea on December 28 in stormy weather, during what was supposed to be a short trip from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore. The plane's black boxes were recovered this week providing investigators with a wealth of information to determine what caused the crash, and on Wednesday a Singapore navy vessel spotted the fuselage, the jet's main body. So far just 51 bodies of the crash victims have been recovered, but authorities hope the main section will contain most of those belonging to passengers and crew.

# Myanmar 'playing with fire'

### US, UN warn the country over growing religious intolerance

AFP, Yangon  
A top American diplomat yesterday decried growing religious intolerance in Myanmar and warned the use of faith for political ends was "playing with fire" in a crunch election year for the former junta-run country. His comments came as hundreds of monks staged a rally in Yangon blasting the United Nations' rights envoy for perceived bias towards Rohingya Muslims, in the latest show of strength for Buddhist nationalists. "We expressed a concern that the use of religion in particular to divide people -- whether it is done for political or for any other purposes -- is incredibly dangerous, particularly in an election year," Tom Malinowski, a senior state department human rights envoy, told reporters after a six day mission to the country. The delegation voiced fears "this really is playing with fire and exposing the country to dangers that it is not



after decades of harsh military rule. United Nations Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, was denounced by crowds of monks in the main city of Yangon as she concluded her second official visit to the country

yesterday. The UN envoy warned that inter-religious violence remains a "significant problem" in Myanmar, particularly in unrest-torn Rakhine state, where she said continuing acute tensions between Muslims and Buddhists could have "far-reaching implications". "The election is a very critical time in shaping the future of Myanmar and the situation in Rakhine is still in a state of crisis," she told reporters. Buddhist-majority Myanmar has large minority religious groups, particularly Muslims and Christians, who are both estimated to account for around four percent of the population, although many believe the number of Muslims could be higher. Religious intolerance, sporadically spilling into lethal bloodshed, has spread across Myanmar since 2012, when unrest between Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists ignited Rakhine state.

# US to send 400 troops to train Syrian rebels

BBC ONLINE  
The US Department of Defense is to send 400 troops and hundreds of support staff to train moderate rebels against Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria. It is not yet clear where the troops will be drawn from or where they will be based, though Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have offered to host them. The US aims to train more than 5,000 rebels annually for three years. It marks an expansion in the US training of Syrian rebels which began in March 2013 in Jordan. This covert programme was led by the CIA. In October 2014 it was announced that the project would be escalated and a parallel Pentagon programme established. The latest announcement comes days after senior US officials met Syrian opposition leaders in Istanbul, Turkey. Across the border in Iraq, the US has sent more than 3,000 troops to train Iraqi and Kurdish forces. Critics of the training mission say it is too small and too slow to be effective against IS. The CIA estimates that the group may have as many as 31,500 fighters. There are also concerns that the US may end up training rebels linked to other extremist groups such as the al-Qaeda affiliate the Nusra Front. The US has been carrying out air strikes against IS in Iraq and Syria since August as part of an international coalition to "degrade and destroy" the group.



## Pakistan bans JuD, Haqqani network

TNN, Islamabad  
Within 48 hours of US Secretary of State John Kerry leaving Pakistan's shores, the government here banned 12 organisations, including the Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD), a front for the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, as well as the Haqqani network. India blames JuD chief Hafiz Saeed for the 2008 Mumbai attacks for which the UN had banned his organisation in December 2008. The move is seen as part of its renewed anti-terror efforts in the wake of last month's Peshawar school attack. The decision also comes a day after the US State Department declared Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan chief Mullah Fazlullah, sheltered in Afghanistan, a "specially designated global terrorist" on Islamabad's insistence. Last year the State Department had named JuD as a "foreign terrorist organisation". Fazlullah had claimed responsibility for the December 16 attack on the Army Public School, Peshawar, in which 150 people, mostly children, were mowed down in cold blood. Amir Rana, executive director, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad, said the banning of an organisation means freezing of its assets, blocking of its funding sources and proper monitoring of its activities.

# China detains spy chief in anti-graft crackdown

PTI, Beijing  
China yesterday said it has detained one of its top spy chiefs and has named 16 military commanders for alleged corruption, indicating President Xi Jinping's bold, sweeping crackdown on graft has now touched the communist nation's powerful army and intelligence set-up. Ma Jian, the executive deputy head of the state intelligence agency, has been placed under investigations for suspected "serious violation of party disciplines and law", anti-corruption watchdog China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said in a terse statement, confirming earlier reports that country's most powerful security official was detained. The term "serious violation of party disciplines and law" has usually been used by the communist nation as a euphemism for graft. A number of Ma's relatives were also arrested. Ma is the most senior

security official to be probed since the downfall of Zhou Yongkang, the country's former security czar, in a graft scandal last July. While few details were available on this unprecedented action, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post which first reported his arrest on January 12 said Ma was reportedly linked to a high-profile anti-graft probe into activities of top management of Founder Group, a Peking University-owned technology conglomerate. Ma, one of China's top spy chiefs who was in charge of the country's massive but less known counter-espionage operations, is believed to be close to Founder chief executive Li You, who allegedly financed hugely profitable securities trades carried out by one of Ma's relatives. Founder said last week that Li, its chairman Wei Xin, and president Yu Li were taken away to "assist the authorities with their investigations".



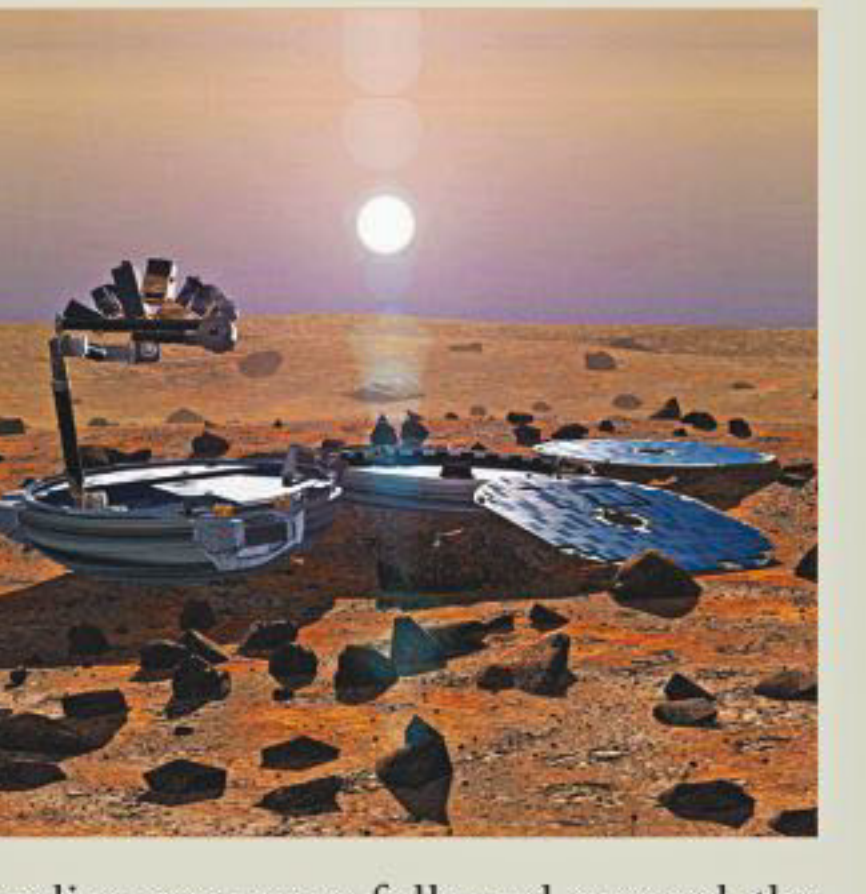
Protesters hold placards in front of the Saudi embassy in Washington, DC on January 15, 2015 during a demonstration against the 10-year prison sentence and 1,000 lashes of Saudi activist Raef Badawi for "insulting Islam" in a blogpost. Saudi Arabia yesterday postponed public flogging of the activist on medical grounds, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. Badawi was subjected to the first 50 lashes a week and was due to be flogged again after Friday prayers.

PHOTO: AFP

# Lost and found on Mars

### Long-lost British space probe found on the red planet

AFP, London  
A British-built space probe that disappeared without trace more than a decade ago has been spotted on the surface of Mars, the UK Space Agency said yesterday. The Beagle 2 lander was found partially deployed with one of its parachutes still attached in images taken by NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO). Scientists said it would be impossible to renew contact or retrieve data from the machine, which was lost without trace on December 26, 2003. "These images are consistent with the Beagle 2 having successfully landed on Mars," David Parker, head of the UK Space Agency, told reporters in London. Parker said the find vindicated the hard work behind the ill-fated mission, which has remained a mystery. The driving force behind the project, planetary scientist Colin Pillinger, died last year not knowing whether his rover landed successfully or not. The mission gripped Britain and there were emotional reactions to the presumed destruction of Beagle 2 during a



landing sequence followed around the country. Named after Charles Darwin's ship HMS Beagle, Beagle 2 was shaped like a giant pocket watch and opened to reveal solar panels, a robotic arm and research equipment designed to search for signs of life. It rode piggy-back to Mars aboard the European Space Agency's Mars Express in 2003, taking off from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in the first European mission to explore another planet.

# POLITICAL CHAOS IN LIBYA

## Warring parties agree on unity roadmap

AFP, Geneva  
Libya's warring factions have agreed on a roadmap to form a unity government after two days of UN-brokered talks in Geneva, touted as the last chance to avert total anarchy. The North African nation has been wracked by conflict since the overthrow of dictator Muammar in a 2011 uprising, with rival governments and powerful militias battling for control of key cities and the country's vast oil riches. UN special envoy to Syria, Bernardino Leon, had warned at the start of the talks that they were a last-ditch effort to prevent all-out chaos. "The participants agreed after extensive deliberation on an agenda that includes reaching a political agreement to form a consensual national unity government and the necessary security arrangements to end the fighting," a UN statement said. It said the talks "were constructive and... reflected the participants' sincere commitment to reach common ground." The participants called on all the players to cease hostilities to create a conducive environment for the dialogue, and "expressed their unequivocal commitment to a united and democratic Libya governed by the rule of law and respect for human rights." They agreed to work towards the release of abducted people, providing and allowing humanitarian aid to reach affected regions, opening airports and securing land and maritime navigation.

# Israel irritating allies over Palestine recognition

### Says Sweden; UN calls on Tel Aviv to unlock tax payment

AGENCIES  
Sweden's foreign minister yesterday said Israel had irritated close allies by over-reacting to Stockholm recognizing the state of Palestine, saying its rhetoric over the issue had "crossed all limits". "It is unacceptable how they have been talking about us and everybody else," Margot Wallstrom said in an interview in daily Dagens Nyheter. "It has irritated not only us, but the Americans and everyone who has anything to do with them right now." Relations between Israel and Sweden have nose-dived since Social Democrat Prime Minister Stefan Lofven used his inaugural address in parliament last year to announce that his country would recognize a Palestinian state. Israeli said the move was ill-considered, would not contribute to peace and called its ambassador back to Jerusalem for discussions. The United States said recognition was

premature. In the interview, Wallstrom said Sweden supported Israel, Palestine and peace, but was sharply critical of Israel's policies. "Israel has been extremely aggressive," she said. "They have continued with their settlement policies, they have continued demolitions, they have continued with their occupation policies which entail a humiliation of Palestinians, which makes the (peace) process difficult." Wallstrom had been due to go to Israel this week, but postponed her trip. The Swedish government said the decision was due to scheduling difficulties, but Swedish radio quoted an official at the Israeli foreign ministry saying Wallstrom would not have been extended an official welcome by Israel. "We said that it is difficult to put these meetings together, diplomatic meetings of any kind, as we approach the elections," Paul Hirschson, spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry, told Reuters.

