

Russia arrests two over Nemtsov killing

Two suspects have been arrested over the killing of Russian opposition activist Boris Nemtsov, who was gunned down near the Kremlin in a brazen assassination that shocked the country, the state security agency said yesterday.

Ausie executions: Indonesia stands firm

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has defended his decision to reject clemency for foreigners on death row for drug smuggling, but said he does not rule out abolishing capital punishment in the future.

Pak schools renamed after massacre victims

One hundred and seven schools in Pakistan have been renamed in honor of the children killed in a Taliban siege at a Peshawar school last year. According to the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the local schools now bear the name of a student killed during the December 16 attack on the Army Public School.

Iraqi man watching his first snowfall killed

An Iraqi man watching his first snowfall in his new American hometown was shot and killed by an unknown assailant, according to Dallas police. Authorities have stepped up patrols in the neighborhood where Ahmed Al-Jumaili lived -- and died -- in their effort to find whoever killed the 36-year-old early Thursday as he and his brother watched the snow while Al-Jumaili's wife took photos.

Pakistan arrests 45 Indian fishermen

Pakistani marine forces have arrested 45 Indian fishermen for violating territorial waters in the Arabian Sea, police said yesterday. Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency detained the fishermen on Friday after they strayed into Pakistani waters, and they were handed over to local police in the port city of Karachi, a senior police official told AFP.

Five shot dead in Mali nightclub

Two Europeans and three locals were shot dead in a nightclub Mali's capital early yesterday in a suspected terror attack that came as the government reached a key stage of peace talks with militants in the restive north. At least one masked gunman entered the club in an area of Bamako popular with expatriates around 1:00 am (0100 GMT) and opened fire, according to security forces.

Two Ferguson cops quit

Racist emails -- like one that depicted President Obama as a chimpanzee -- resulted in three Ferguson, Missouri, city employees resigning or being fired, the city spokesman said Friday. Police officers Capt Rick Henke and Sgt William Mudd resigned Thursday over the emails discovered during the US Department of Justice investigation of racial prejudice in the city's police and judicial system, city spokesman Jeff Small said on Friday, citing the city attorney.



A Turkish Airlines plane is loaded onto a truck as workers prepared to move it after it slid off the tarmac at Kathmandu's international airport yesterday. Kathmandu's international airport was closed for a fourth day, leaving thousands stranded at the start of the tourist season, after a plane skidded off its only runway. The airport was reopened for services yesterday.

Heavy weapons pullback complete

Says east Ukraine rebels; Germany says Russia backs OSCE unlimited access in east Ukraine

Pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine claimed yesterday to have completed their end of a February deal with government forces to withdraw heavy weapons from the frontline as part of a truce. "Today is the last day of the weapons withdrawal," Eduard Basurin, one of the rebel leaders told reporters in the town of Snizhne, where the separatists presented eight 120mm mortars that had been moved back from their positions. Watched by six international monitors, the separatists towed the arms to a disused brick factory serving as an arms depot, about 90 kilometres from the rebel hub of Donetsk.

The crucial question is of course that the OSCE gets access there where it was denied access in the past," Steinmeier said after an EU foreign ministers meeting in the Latvian capital Riga. "Yesterday in the talks in Berlin and as well as between President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor (Angela Merkel) we got the assurance at least from the Russian side that the OSCE should be guaranteed unlimited access," he added. OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier said Friday that the group was still being denied full access to monitor the truce. "There are areas which we simply can't reach," Zannier told AFP in Riga where he attended the EU foreign ministers meeting. Steinmeier said he had later checked with Lavrov that the OSCE would also be allowed full access to verify the complete withdrawal of heavy weapons, a key provision in the February 12 Minsk accord brokered by France and Germany with Russia and Ukraine.



Militants of the self-proclaimed People Republic of Donetsk unload 120mm mortars from a truck, in a hangar in Snizhne, some 90 kms east of Donetsk, yesterday.

Malaysia UNREST Protestors demand Anwar's release

Several thousand people marched through Kuala Lumpur yesterday to demand the release of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who was jailed last month for five years on sodomy charges. Chanting "Free Anwar!" and "Reformasi" (Reform), the demonstrators, led by members of Anwar's family, staged a short march from a busy shopping district toward the capital's Petronas Towers skyscrapers. An AFP journalist estimated the crowd at around 5,000. Some in the crowd chanted "Down with Najib", a reference to Prime Minister Najib Razak, and carried an effigy of him. But there were no incidents seen, and no large police presence, despite police in recent days declaring the rally illegal. Anwar has said his conviction on charges that he sodomised a former male aide in 2008 was cooked up by Malaysia's 58-year-old government to thwart the opposition, which has made significant gains in recent parliamentary elections. The government strongly denies the accusation and insists that its judicial system is independent and impartial. "Little by little the voice of the people will be heard, that's why today's event is significant," said Ambiga Sreenevasan, a campaigner for democratic reform who took part in the march. "They (demonstrators) are troubled by what is happening here." The United States has been among the international critics of the conviction, saying it raised questions over the rule of law in Malaysia.

PRO-MORSI VIOLENCE CASE Egypt carries out first hanging

Egypt on yesterday carried out the first death sentence handed down over the violence that erupted after the army's 2013 overthrow of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, the interior ministry said. Hundreds of Morsi supporters have been sentenced to death after speedy mass trials, which the United Nations has described as "unprecedented in recent history". Mahmoud Ramadan, who was hanged at 7 am (0500 GMT), was the "first to be executed of those involved in violent clashes," ministry spokesman Hani Abdel Latif said. A court in Egypt's second city Alexandria sentenced Ramadan and another Morsi supporter to death in 2014 after convicting them of throwing youths off an apartment block, killing one of them. A government crackdown on Morsi's supporters left hundreds dead and thousands detained and put on trial. Hundreds were killed in a single day on August 14, 2013, when police stormed two pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo. The ousted president is himself facing multiple trials on charges that carry the death penalty.

NIRBHAYA RAPE ROW BCI issues notices to lawyers

The Executive Committee of the Bar Council of India on Friday midnight issued showcause notice to two defence lawyers for allegedly making derogatory remarks about women in the controversial BBC documentary 'India's Daughter' on the Nirbhaya rape incident. "We held discussions on the question whether the alleged remarks made by the two lawyers amounted to professional misconduct," Bar Council of India Chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra told The Hindu yesterday. Mishra said the two lawyers in question -- Manohar Lal Sharma and A K Singh -- have three weeks' time to respond to the BCI notice. "They can either seek an oral, in-person hearing or file their written replies to the notice issued. We will then examine the question of professional misconduct under the Advocates Act. If found liable for professional misconduct, BCI can choose to revoke the lawyers' licences," he said. Sharma and Singh are defence lawyers for the four persons on death row for the brutal gang-rape and killing of a 23-year-old medical student in Delhi in December 2012.

NAGALAND LYNCHING Questions raised

Alleged rapist's brother cries foul over killing. Jamal Uddin Khan, the brother of the man lynched in Nagaland's Dimapur on Thursday, has claimed that medical reports have shown that the woman who had filed a rape complaint against his brother had not been sexually assaulted. Speaking to NDTV, he alleged that his brother, Syed Sarif Uddin Khan, had been made a scapegoat and framed by Naga groups, and claimed that the police were hand in glove in the incident. A number of questions have been raised over the events leading to the lynching. These include questions over the unavail-

Iran must prove nuke ambitions peaceful

Says Kerry, seeks to boost European unity. Iran has yet to prove to the world it wants a peaceful nuclear programme, top US diplomat John Kerry said yesterday, warning with his French counterpart that gaps still had to be overcome to clinch a deal. "Critical weeks" lie ahead as a March 31 deadline looms to seal a political framework on reining in Iran's suspect atomic programme, Kerry said after meeting with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. "We want an agreement that's solid," Kerry told reporters ahead of four-way talks to also include German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and their British counterpart Philip Hammond. "We want an agreement that will guarantee that we are holding any kind of programme that continues in Iran accountable to the highest standards so that we know in fact that it is a peaceful programme." The US secretary of state flew in from London on the last stop of a week-long trip to brief his European counterparts on the state of the negotiations. France has privately expressed concern that Washington could be rushing into a deal without ensuring iron-clad guarantees are in place to stop Tehran acquiring a nuclear bomb. But in a show of unity, Kerry said he had "the same assessment" as Fabius. "We have made progress, but there remain gaps, divergences as he (Fabius) said, and we need to close those gaps," Kerry insisted. "And that is our goal over the course of the next days. We have a critical couple of weeks ahead of us."



'Fishermen entering waters could be shot'

India reacts over Lanka PM's warning. India will strongly take up with Sri Lanka the fishermen issue during delegation-level talks between the two countries, officials said yesterday. "India and Sri Lanka have been approaching this as a humanitarian matter which is an emotional issue. This is not an issue that can be addressed immediately with quick-fix solutions but we will work on it as friends and maritime neighbours," ministry of external affairs spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin said. "We hope to resolve this in a peaceful and friendly manner," he said ahead of external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj's talks here with the Lankan leadership. Swaraj is here on a two-day trip to set the stage for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country, the first bilateral tour by an Indian PM in over 25 years. Swaraj on Friday had called on Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who assured her that his government is committed to strengthening ties with India. Ahead of Modi's visit, PM Ranil Wickramasinghe has stoked a controversy suggesting that Indian fishermen may be shot if they intruded into Sri Lankan waters. Allying that Indian fishermen were taking away the livelihood of Northern Lanka fishermen, he told Tamil Thanthi TV that, "If someone tries to break into my house, I can shoot. If he gets killed... Law allows me to do that." The remarks by Sri Lankan prime minister on the fishermen issue will also be raised by external affairs minister Swaraj during her meeting with her Lankan counterpart Mangala Samaraweera, ministry of external affairs sources said. As many as 86 Indian fishermen were arrested and their 10 fishing boats seized by the Sri Lanka navy for allegedly poaching in the country's waters last month.



Mummies found on Mexico's highest peak

Two mummified bodies found on Mexico's highest peak appear to be embracing each other and their discovery could put an end to the mystery of climbers who vanished after an avalanche in 1959, officials said. A mission to recover the bodies from the Pico de Orizaba was suspended until next Monday in order to build a special container to carry the remains intact, one of the rescue workers said Friday. The expedition in the central state of Puebla was launched on Thursday after climbers found a frozen head sticking out of the glacier near the summit earlier in the week. As two members of the expedition began to dig around the body, they discovered a second body, said Francisco Rodriguez, one of the mountaineers. The discovery raised hopes that the two bodies could finally end a 55-year-old mystery. Veteran climber Luis Espinoza Ruiz, who is in his 70s, told AFP that he believes the bodies belong to two of three friends who were buried under an avalanche during a climb on November 2, 1959.



MISSING MH370 'Back to drawing board' if search fails: Malaysia

Malaysia's transport minister said yesterday the hunt for MH370 would be sent "back to the drawing board" if the search now under way comes up empty, but insisted his government remained committed to finding the plane. Liow Tiong Lai's comments, made on the eve of the tragedy's anniversary, echoed recent remarks by Australian officials who have suggested the expensive search effort in a 60,000-square-kilometre area of the southern Indian Ocean could be abandoned. "If the search does not yield anything by May or after we have completed the 60,000-square-kilometre search, then we have to go back to the drawing board," Liow told AFP in an interview. He said that would mean re-examining all available data that was used to determine the suspected crash zone for the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777, but would not specify what could happen next. But he added: "I would like to say to the next of kin that we will continue to be committed to the search." Today's anniversary looms as a painful milestone for relatives of the 239 passengers and crew aboard the plane -- which inexplicably diverted from its Kuala Lumpur-Beijing route shortly after takeoff last March 8 -- many of whom are deeply unhappy with the lack of progress.