

# NEWSIN brief

## Baltimore calm after curfew

Riot police in the US city of Baltimore enforced a curfew into the early hours of yesterday and called it a success, emptying streets scarred by a spasm of rioting and looting. The unrest erupted Monday after the funeral of a 25-year-old African-American man, Freddie Gray, who died after suffering severe spinal injuries during an arrest earlier this month. Monday's violence saw stores looted, more than 140 vehicles burned, 20 police wounded and more

## Kim Jong-Un executed 15 top officials: report

North Korea's Kim Jong-Un ordered the execution of 15 senior officials this year, including several who complained about the young leader's policies, South Korea's intelligence agency said yesterday. Those executed included two vice minister-level officials, the Yonhap news agency reported, citing legislators who attended a briefing by the National

## Israel allows building material into Gaza

Israel allowed 14,000 tonnes of building material into war-devastated Gaza yesterday, the defence ministry said of the largest single shipment since a July-August conflict ended in the blockaded territory. COGAT, the coordinating body for Israeli government policy in the Palestinian territories, told AFP that some 354 trucks passed through the Kerem Shalom goods crossing in the southern Gaza Strip carrying "construction materi-



From left, clockwise, funeral pyres burn during a mass cremation of earthquake victims on the banks of Bagmati river at the Pasupathinath temple in Kathmandu, yesterday; people scuffle with police in protest over the lack of aid being provided to victims by the government; and rescuers dig a man alive from rubbles after 82 hours in Kathmandu. More story on page 16.



PHOTO: AFP

# New heir to throne named

### King changes succession line, announces major cabinet reshuffle

Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday named his powerful interior minister as heir in a generational shift that also saw one of his sons promoted to second in line to the throne. A royal decree removed Crown Prince Moqren bin Abdul Aziz bin Saud, 69, as heir and replaced him with Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, 55, who led a crackdown on al-Qaeda in the oil-rich kingdom a decade ago. Riyadh also changed its foreign minister in the second major government shakeup since King Salman inherited power in January. Accentuating the move to a more youthful leadership, Salman, 79, also promoted one of his sons, Mohammed bin Salman, to be deputy crown prince. Mohammed bin Salman, in his early 30s, retains the position of defence minister, in which he has overseen more than a month of air strikes against Iran-backed rebels in neighbouring Yemen. Saudi Arabia's envoy to the United States, Adel al-Jubeir, 53, was appointed foreign minister. He replaces Prince Saud al-Faisal who was born in 1940 and "asked to be

## SAUDI POWER RESHUFFLE



King Salman



Mohammed bin Nayef, Mohammed bin Salman, Saud al-Faisal

relieved from his duties due to his health condition," said a royal decree carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. The dismissal of Moqren removes one of the few remaining high-level officials from the era of King Abdullah, who died on January 23 and was replaced by Salman, 79.

Moqren would have been the last son of the kingdom's founder, Abdul Aziz bin Saud, to rule the country established in 1932. It was the first time a crown prince was relieved of his duty in the kingdom's history. Moqren's removal leaves Mohammed bin Nayef as the first of the second generation, or grandsons of Abdul Aziz, in line to lead the conservative Islamic kingdom. Mohammed bin Nayef's appointment further solidifies control of Salman's Sudayri branch of the royal family. Their influence had waned under Abdullah. Under Salman, Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia has adopted a more assertive foreign policy, leading the coalition targeting Shia rebels in Yemen since late March. The appointment of Jubeir, who came to attention answering reporters' questions in the United States in defence of his country's actions, as foreign minister is unusual as he is not a member of the ruling family. Prince Saud had held the post since 1975, making him the world's longest-serving foreign minister.

# Anger flares in Nepal

### Protesters clash with riot police over aid; UN appeals for \$415m for reconstruction

Desperate survivors of an earthquake that killed more than 5,000 people clashed with riot police in Nepal's capital yesterday, as the United Nations appealed for \$415 million for the devastated Himalayan nation. Supplies of food and water are running thin and aftershocks have strained nerves in the ruined Kathmandu, home to some 2.5 million before it was shattered by Saturday's 7.8 magnitude quake. Desperate to leave, thousands of people gathered outside the main bus station after the government promised to lay on special services to far-flung rural areas. But when the buses failed to materialise, anger surged and scuffles broke out between the crowds and riot police who were sent to try to contain the situation near parliament. "We've been left starving in the cold and the best this government can give us is this queue. Why are they so slow?" demanded Rajana as she lined up along with thousands of others for a bus to her home village. "I keep hearing on the news that all governments and aid agencies are here, but where are they? Our government is totally absent. Forget shelter, they couldn't even give us water," said Rajana, who goes by one name.

Columns of riot police stood behind rolls of barbed wire as rioters armed with sticks surged into the street, attacking buses and other vehicles. Hundreds of thousands of people across the country settled down for a fifth night under tents. Their homes were either wrecked or were feared to be on the verge of collapse. "There have been some weaknesses in managing the relief operation," Communications Minister Minendra Rijal told Nepal's Kantipur Television, acknowledging the government had been overwhelmed by the devastation from the deadliest quake in Nepal since 1934. There was also desperation in devastated rural areas. People have been pleading to be airlifted out when the occasional helicopter has reached their villages with relief supplies. A total of 5,057 people are known to have died in Nepal and around 100 more in neighbouring India and China. Around 8,000 were injured while the United Nations estimates that eight million people have been affected. On Wednesday, the world body appealed for \$415 million for Nepal, saying that around 70,000 houses had been destroyed and another 530,000 damaged. One estimate has put the cost of reconstruction at \$5 billion.

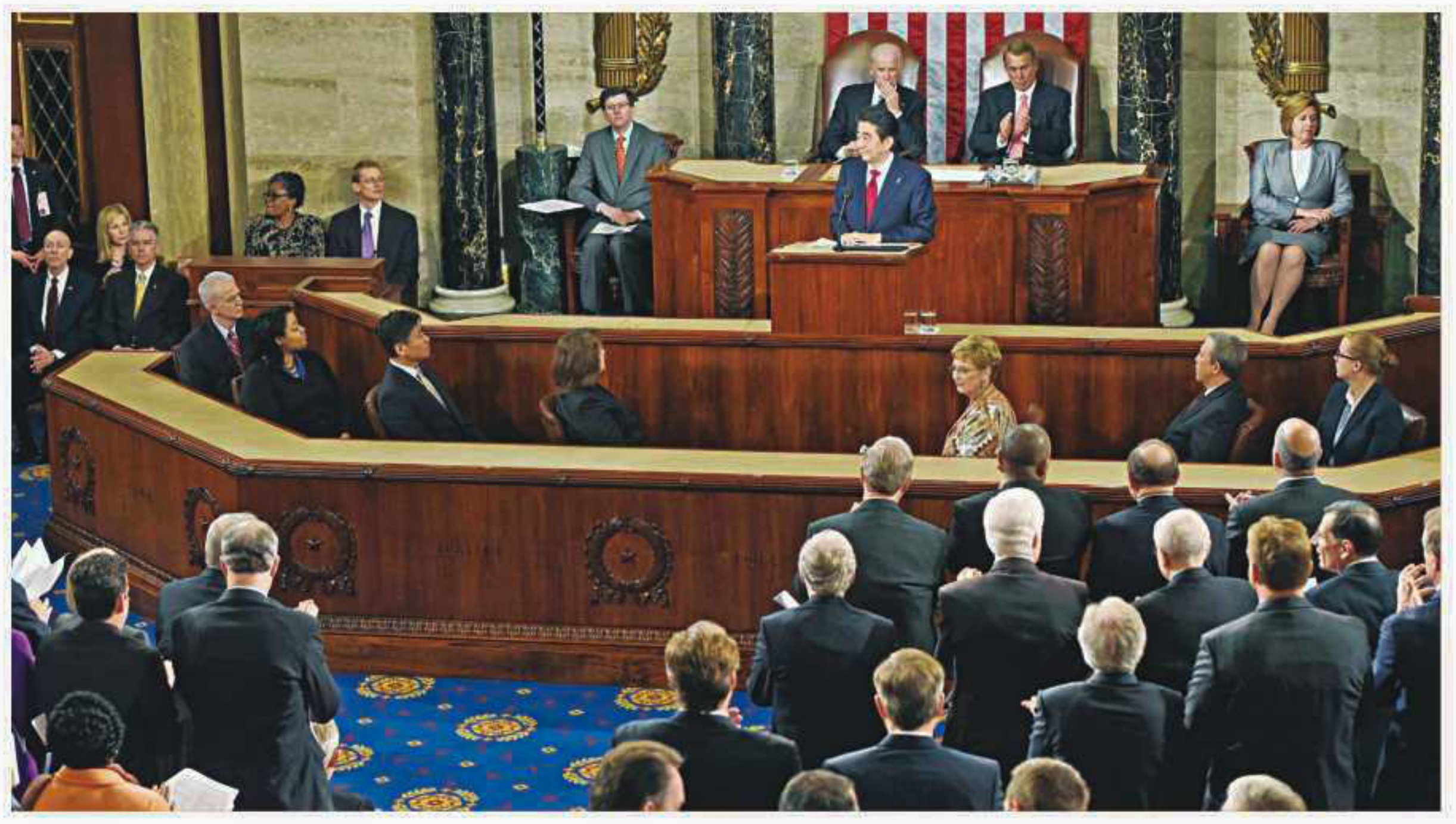


## India rejects push for better ties

India has failed to respond to Pakistan's desire for good relations, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said, in rare rebuke of a neighbour with which he has promised to mend ties. Sharif made improving relations with India a priority when he swept to power for a third time in a 2013 election, raising hopes that a Pakistani civilian government would finally wrest control of foreign policy from the powerful military. The nuclear-armed neighbours' top diplomats met in Pakistan last month, after at least a dozen people were killed in a series of exchanges of fire along their disputed border, but there has been little sign of progress in ties. "Our desire for good neighbourly relations with India has not been reciprocated," Sharif told the Saudi Gazette in an interview during a recent visit that was published in Pakistani newspapers yesterday. Pakistan's coup-prone military traditionally sees relations with India as its of responsibility, even during civilian rule. Sharif's aim to improve ties with India was widely seen as cause of friction with the army, though tension has eased since last year when the military helped calm anti-government protests. A government insider said at the time Sharif would stay in power but had to "share space" with the army on issues such as relations with India and security.

# SREBRENICA GENOCIDE Dutch UN leaders not liable: Court

A Dutch appeals court yesterday ruled that three former UN commanders will not be prosecuted for the deaths of three Muslim men who were murdered after leaving a UN compound in Srebrenica in 1995. Relatives of the three victims took UN Dutch Battalion commanders to court five years ago, saying the three were expelled into the hands of Bosnian Serb forces during the darkest episode of the country's 1991-95 civil war. Almost 8,000 Muslim men and boys were slaughtered and buried in mass graves in mid-July 1995 at Srebrenica by Serb forces commanded by Ratko Mladic in the worst atrocity on European soil since World War II. Prosecutors in 2013 said they would not charge Dutchbat commander Tom Karremans, his deputy Rob Franken and personnel officer Berend Oosterveen for the three deaths, but the victims' families appealed. The victims sought safety with Dutch troops, but the plaintiffs say they were forced to flee into the hands of the Bosnian Serb army commanded by general Mladic -- himself now on trial for genocide and war crimes before the Hague-based Yugoslavia war crimes court.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, yesterday. Shinzo Abe yesterday expressed "deep remorse" over Japan's actions toward neighboring Asian nations during World War II, but stopped short of a full apology for mass sexual slavery, in a joint meeting of Congress address, first by a Japan prime minister.

## Nigeria rescues 293 girls, women from Boko Haram

The Nigerian army says it has rescued 200 girls and 93 women from Boko Haram camps in the Sambisa forest. It was hoped that the Chibok girls, who were kidnapped by Boko Haram almost exactly a year ago, had been found but the Nigerian military said they are not among those rescued. The rescue occurred during a mission to wrestle back control of the Sambisa forest from Boko Haram. Army spokesman Col Sani Usman said troops destroyed and cleared four militant camps and rescued 200 abducted girls and 93 women "but they are not the Chibok girls". It was added that Nigerian troops had also destroyed three camps run by the militants. The girls and women will be screened on 29 April to determine whether they had been abducted or if they were married to the militants, one intelligence source said. Some of the girls were injured, and some of the militants killed. Boko Haram kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls near the northern village of Chibok in April 2014. The actions of the militant group sparked international outcry and a widespread campaign for their rescue. Diplomats and intelligence officials said they believed at least some of the girls were being held in Sambisa forest which is around 100 km (60 miles) from Chibok, although US reconnaissance drones failed to find them. Nigerian forces backed by warplanes invaded the vast former colonial game reserve late last week as part of a push to win back territory from the group.

## Unmanned spacecraft 'plunging to Earth'

An unmanned Russian cargo spacecraft ferrying supplies to the International Space Station is plunging back to Earth and apparently out of control, an official said yesterday. "It has started descending. It has nowhere else to go," an official familiar with the situation told AFP on condition of anonymity, speaking ahead of an official Russian space agency statement expected later in the day. "It is clear that absolutely uncontrollable reactions have begun." The official said the descent likely marked the end of the Progress spacecraft's mission although the Russian authorities will contact it again to make sure everything has been done to rescue it. "We have scheduled two more communication sessions to soothe our conscience," said the official, adding it was hard to predict when exactly the vessel would fall back to Earth. A Soyuz rocket carrying the Progress M-27M spacecraft with supplies for the ISS successfully launched on Tuesday but communication with the vessel was lost soon afterwards. A spokesman for the Russian space agency, Mikhail Fadeyev, declined immediate comment. The loss of the Progress supply ship would be the latest embarrassment for Russia's space programme that has been recently hit by a series of mishaps.

## Syria regime bombing kills 21 in north

Air strikes by Syrian government forces yesterday killed at least 21 people, including six children, and wounded 50 in the northern provinces of Aleppo and Idlib, a monitor said. In the south of Aleppo city, a small girl was among four civilians killed in the rebel-held neighbourhood of Ferdis, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Another seven civilians died in Deir Hafer and Bab, two areas located in the east and north of Aleppo under the control of ISIS jihadist group, said the Observatory. Explosives-filled barrels and missiles were used in the wave of bombing, which left 50 people wounded. In Idlib, air strikes killed 10 people, five of them children, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources on the ground for its reports.

# Indonesian executions of foreigners spark int'l fury

### Australia to recall ambassador; Jakarta defends action after convicts die 'singing'

Indonesia faced a storm of international protest yesterday for putting seven foreign drug convicts before a firing squad, but Filipinos rejoiced after a compatriot was spared at the last minute. Australia withdrew its ambassador in protest at what it called "cruel and unnecessary" executions, Brazil expressed strong regret and France vowed a diplomatic battle to save a citizen still on death row. Indonesia staunchly defended the executions as a vital front of its "war" on drugs, as testimony emerged of how the condemned men went singing to their deaths. The seven -- two from Australia, one from Brazil and four from Africa -- were shot along with one Indonesian, despite strident foreign appeals and pleas from family members. Brazil expressed "deep regret" at the execution of its national, who is mentally ill

according to his family, and said it was weighing its next move. The condemned men reportedly all refused blindfolds and sang hymns, among them "Amazing Grace", as they went to face the firing squad in a jungle clearing, according to a pastor who was with them. As the clock ticked down to midnight, a group of tearful supporters also sang hymns, embraced and held candles aloft during a vigil at the port in Cilacap, the gateway to the prison island of Nusakambangan. A Filipina originally set to be executed was given an 11th hour reprieve after a woman who allegedly duped her into ferrying drugs to Indonesia came forward to police in the Philippines. The reprieve for Mary Jane Veloso was hailed in the Philippines as a miracle and a gift from God, but Indonesian Attorney General Muhammad Prasetyo stressed it was only a "postponement" to allow time for police investigations.



PHOTO: AFP