

NEWS IN brief

8 cops among 22 killed in Macedonia clashes

AFP, Skopje
Eight policemen and 14 gunmen have been killed in two days of clashes in the restive north of Macedonia, police said yesterday. "Eight police officers were killed and 37 were injured" in shooting in Kumanovo that began Saturday at dawn, a police spokesman said, adding that 14 bodies in uniforms were also found, allegedly those of members of a "terrorist group".

Castro thanks pope in Vatican visit

AFP, Vatican City
Cuban President Raul Castro met with Pope Francis at the Vatican yesterday, thanking the pontiff for his role in brokering the recent rapprochement between Havana and Washington, a papal spokesman said. The first South American pope played a key role in secret negotiations between the United States and Cuba, which led to the surprise announcement in December that the two countries would seek to restore diplomatic ties after more than 50 years

S African opposition elects first black leader

AFP, Port Elizabeth
South Africa's main opposition party the Democratic Alliance on Sunday elected Mmusi Maimane as its first black leader, a major step in its efforts to challenge the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Maimane, 34, the party's parliamentary leader, was seen as the clear favourite to succeed Zille in the election, in which 1,425 delegates from across the country voted by

Five killed in Swiss shooting

AFP, Geneva
Five people were killed in a shooting in northern Switzerland, police said yesterday, rocking the normally tranquil nation. The shooter, a 36-year-old Swiss national, in the drama that played out on Saturday evening in the town of Wuerenlingen, near Zurich, was among the dead, local police told a news conference, adding that it was linked to a personal conflict. Local media reports described the shooter as a

Etihad flight diverted over security alert

AFP, Abu Dhabi
An Etihad Airways flight travelling from Cairo to Abu Dhabi was diverted yesterday to a military base in the United Arab Emirates due to a false security alert, the carrier said. All 128 passengers and crew members of the Airbus A321 aircraft were later transferred by coach to Abu Dhabi airport and the plane was also flown to



(From left, clockwise) Devotees gather at the high stone image of Kala Bhairava at Durbar Square; Nepalese women sell garlands of flowers and vegetables near a temple in the historical centre of Kathmandu, yesterday. Certain pockets of Kathmandu are returning back to normal after days of turmoil in the aftermath of the April 25th earthquake that struck Nepal killing over 8,000 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless.



PHOTO: AFP

Panic as three more tremors hit Nepal

Snowfall, landslides hit rescue work; Kathmandu denies entry to British choppers

AGENCIES

Three fresh tremors jolted Nepal yesterday, triggering panic among the people already battered by the devastating earthquake and over 150 aftershocks as the death toll crossed 8,000. Massive landslide and avalanche also forced suspension of rescue works in the popular trekking area of Langtang, where Nepal Army's rescue team has taken out 90 dead bodies, including nine foreigners, so far. According to some media reports, as many as 120 bodies have been pulled out and rescuers who were searching for bodies have moved to safe places. Lieutenant Colonel Anup Jung Thapa said the rescue works was disrupted due to huge piles of frequent avalanche in and around the area.

Meanwhile, three tremors jolted the Himalayan nation yesterday, bringing the total number of aftershocks with 4 or more magnitude on the Richter Scale to over 156.

A 4.2-magnitude tremor was recorded at 1.50am with its epicentre at Sindhupalchowk

district, 100 km east of Kathmandu, one of the worst-affected districts.

Another 4-magnitude tremor was recorded at 2.44am with epicentre at Udaypur district.

The third tremor was of 4.4-magnitude which struck at 6.34am with epicentre at Sindhupalchowk/Tibet, according to the National Seismological Centre, Kathmandu.

No damage due to the tremors was reported so far.

However, they sent a fresh wave of fear and panic among the people who have been forced to stay in open spaces for the past two weeks.

Also, the death toll from the April 25 temblor, the country's worst in over 80 years, reached 8,019 while the number of injured stands at 16,033, according to Nepal Police.

Meanwhile, Nepal's government yesterday said it has denied entry to three British military helicopters sent to help the earthquake relief effort because of fears they could damage buildings when landing.

A foreign ministry spokesman said the Chinook helicopters, which arrived in New Delhi last week en route to the quake-hit country, were too big to land.

DEATH TOLL
8,019

Scotland leader demands more power from Britain

BBC ONLINE

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon yesterday called for new tax and welfare powers to be devolved to Scotland as a "priority".

Sturgeon told the BBC such powers would allow the Scottish government to grow the economy.

She added that she had spoken "briefly" to Prime Minister David Cameron but more discussions were required.

Sturgeon also said her party now provided the main opposition at Westminster.

Labour, with 232 MPs, are the official opposition but Sturgeon claimed her party, which gained 50 MPs on Thursday, was the one putting pressure on Cameron's Conservative government.

The SNP is the third largest party in the UK despite only standing in Scotland.

It took 56 of the 59 seats in Scotland, reducing Labour to just one MP when they had previously had 41.

Speaking to the BBC's Andrew Marr programme, Sturgeon said Cameron did not appear to want to move beyond powers already outlined in the Smith Commission, which was formed after the independence referendum to fulfil the pledge to give Scotland further devolution.

Sturgeon described her party as the "principal opposition to the Conservatives".

She said she would seek to build alliances with others to stand up for "progressive politics".

Responding to former SNP leader Alex Salmond's comments on Saturday that following the party's landslide victory he thought Scotland was now closer to independence, Sturgeon said there was "no disagreement" between them.

She said: "I think Scotland will become an independent country one day."



Typhoon Noul hits north Philippines

Thousands evacuated

AFP, Manila

Typhoon Noul slammed into the northern tip of the Philippines yesterday, triggering warnings of possible flash floods, landslides and storm surges and prompting almost 3,000 people to flee their homes.

The storm hit Cagayan province late yesterday afternoon and was expected to move north towards Japan, the government weather station said.

The civil defence office said there were no immediate reports of storm-related deaths but the typhoon knocked out power in much of the province, making it difficult to get data.

Meteorologists said Noul's movement slowed slightly before reaching the Philippines, but it also strengthened to pack gusts of 220 kilometres per hour.

In Taiwan, authorities warned sailors of strong winds and high waves and evacuated almost 1,000 tourists from an island off the southeast coast.

"This is a very dangerous storm. It is the strongest so far this year," said Rene Paciente, head of the Philippines' marine weather division.

National civil defence chief Alexander Pama said that given the possibility of storm surges of up to two metres (6.5 feet), they were taking no chances.

US rights record in UN spotlight

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations will on Monday review the US rights record, with police brutality and racism, mass surveillance and the legacy of the "war on terror" in the spotlight.

Today's so-called Universal Periodic Review -- which all 193 UN countries must undergo every four years -- is likely to focus on a string of recent killings of unarmed black men by the police.

The US delegation, headed by US ambassador to the council Keith Harper and acting US legal advisor Mary McLeod, were expected to face a range of questions about law enforcement tactics, police brutality and the disproportionate impact on African Americans and other minorities.

Diplomats from around the world are expected to raise questions about widespread incarceration in the United States of illegal immigrants, including children.

Conditions inside US prisons, including the use of long-term solitary confinement, and continued use of the death penalty were also among the issues raised in reports and questions filed in advance of Monday's hearing.

The United States has seen its execution numbers drop in recent years to 35 in 2014, but still ranks fifth in the world after China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, according to Amnesty International.

The issue of mass surveillance systems brought to light in documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, will also certainly be raised, as will US counter-terrorism operations and targeted drone killings.

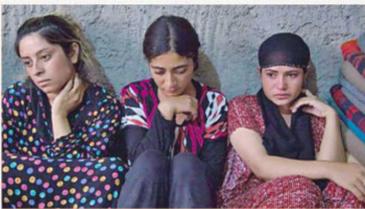


Demonstrators dressed in black take part in a protest against European immigration policies at the Riazor beach in Coruna, northwestern Spain, yesterday. Defence ministers from five EU countries were to meet yesterday for talks on a military campaign to stop human trafficking and reinforce the region's defences against the flow of migrants from North Africa.

PHOTO: AFP

UN tells horror-tale of ISIS sex slaves

A woman was forced to marry 20 times and every time had surgery to restore



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

An Isis terrorist group forced a sex slave to undergo surgery to restore her virginity every time she was married to 20 fighters, a United Nations official has said.

Zainab Bangura, special envoy on sexual violence in conflict, has interviewed dozens of sexual abuse victims in the region.

She said sexual violence is being committed strategically, in a widespread and systematic manner, and with a high-degree of sophistication by most parties to the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

The group of Isis (also known as Isil or Islamic State) fighters would strip the victims naked and categorise them before trading them in "slave bazaars" and shipping them to other provinces.

She said: "Isil have institutionalized

sexual violence and the brutalization of women as a central aspect of their ideology and operations, using it as a tactic of terrorism to advance their key strategic objectives.

The UN report also stated that in February militants fighting in Syria were seeking medical attention to improve their sexual prowess, subjecting their wives to 'brutal, abnormal' sex acts, according to local doctors.

Girls as young as five years old were kidnapped from homes and were raped and abused, according to survivors.

Human Rights Watch has urged the Kurdish and Iraqi authorities to provide rape victims with long-term psychosocial care and realise that even where it is requested, as hymenoplasty is only a temporary reprieve for their trauma.

Centre, states should work together as 'Team India'

PTI, West Bengal

Reaching out to States, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said the Centre and states should work together as 'Team India' to solve national problems like they have worked to resolve issues like the Indo-Bangla Land Boundary Agreement.

"If issues with foreign countries can be resolved through the spirit of 'Team India', solving domestic issues will be very easy," he said after inaugurating the modernised IISCO Steel Plant here.

Observing that the bill to give effect to the Indo-Bangla accord was passed unanimously by Parliament, Modi said all political parties and states like West Bengal, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura worked "shoulder to shoulder with

the Centre" to resolve this issue.

Vowing to work with the states to "take India forward", the Prime Minister said it has been a "misfortune" that in the past there have been tensions between states and the Centre.

23 BANGLADESHI ARRESTED IN TRIPURA

23 Bangladeshis, who were meant to be trafficked to Jammu and Kashmir to work as domestic help, were arrested in Tripura for entering allegedly without valid documents.

Police arrested the 23 Bangladeshis, who had entered Assam from Comilla district, for entering India without passport. Two Indians, including one from Jammu and Kashmir state, were also arrested for helping them in their illegal entry, he said.



The best boss ever?

Chinese billionaire takes 6,400 staff on holiday to France

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

If this isn't the best boss in the world, we'd like to know who is. A generous Chinese boss has treated 6,400 of his employees to a holiday in France at a cost of £24m.

Li Jinyuan, the billionaire owner of Tiens Group, a multinational giant, booked 140



hotels in Paris for more than half of his 12,000 workers, who were treated to tours of sites, including the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, and a trip to the Côte d'Azur.

Li booked 7,600 train tickets on France's high-speed TGV trains to ferry his employees to the south coast, where about 4,760 rooms were booked in four and five star hotels in Monaco and Cannes.