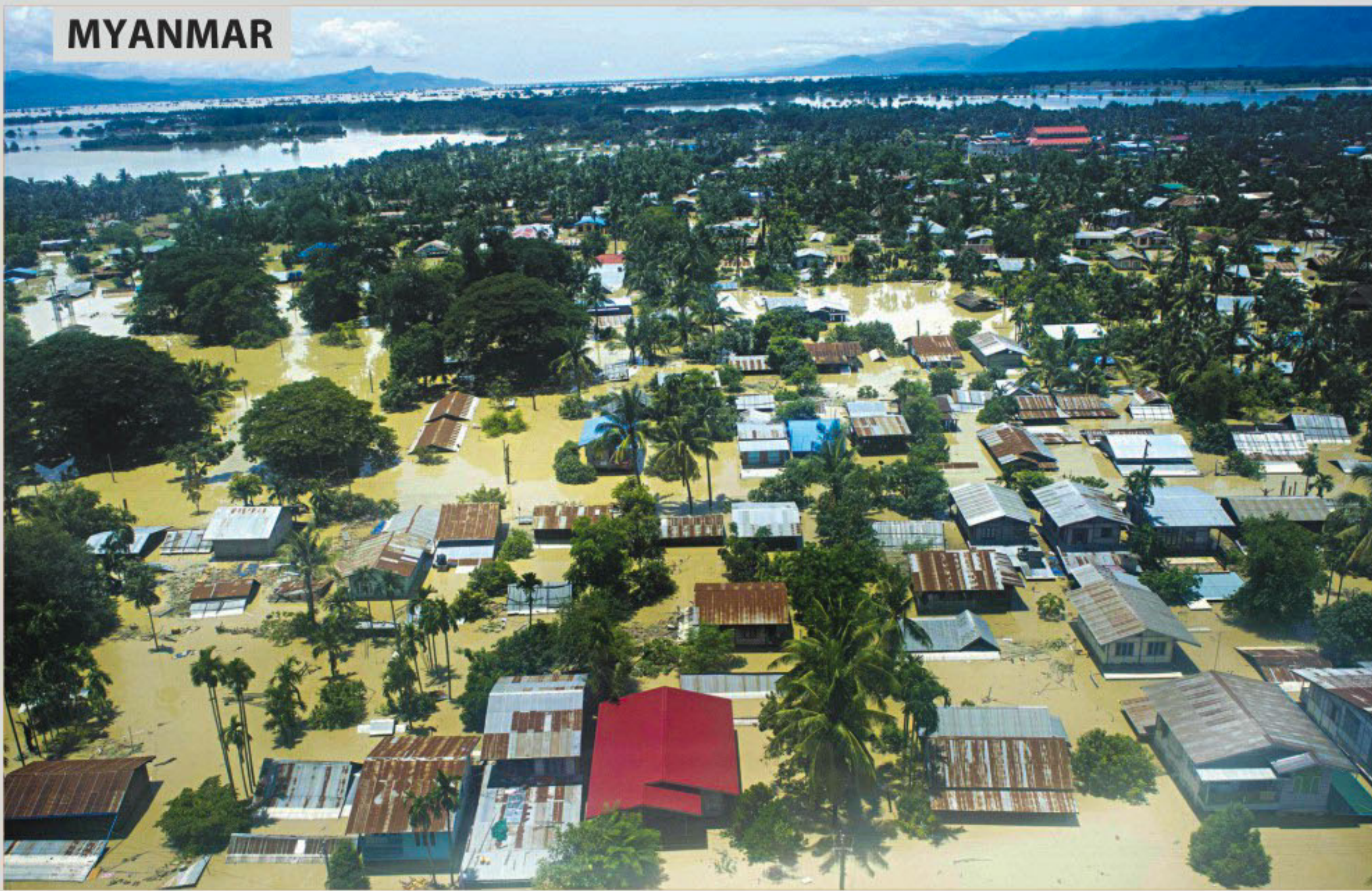


FLOODS Batter SE Asia

An aerial view shows floodwaters inundating houses and vegetation in Kalay, upper Myanmar's Sagaing region; people look at the bridge which was washed away by the floodwaters in Thoubal District in Manipur state, India; and Pakistani flood affected people try to halt the progress of floodwaters outside their homes on the outskirts of Peshawar. Torrential rains and flooding have killed dozens of people in Myanmar, Pakistan and India in past weeks as weather reports predicts more deluge in the coming days.

STORY ON PAGE 16.

PHOTO: AFP



MYANMAR



INDIA



PAKISTAN

Turkish troops killed in 'PKK suicide attack'

AFP, Istanbul

Two Turkish soldiers were killed and at least two dozen other troops were wounded early yesterday in a suicide attack blamed on Kurdish militants, as Ankara kept up its air campaign against the rebels' bases in northern Iraq.

The attack in the Dogubayazit district of the eastern Agri province is the first time Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been accused of staging a suicide attack in the current crisis.

Ankara has launched a two-pronged "anti-terror" offensive against ISIS in Syria and PKK militants based in northern Iraq after a wave of attacks inside Turkey. But so far the bombardments have focused far more on the Kurdish rebels with Turkish official media claiming that 260 suspected PKK members have been killed so far.

Iran nuke deal will make region safer

Kerry says in Egypt as he tries to reassure ME allies

AFP, Cairo

US Secretary of State John Kerry sought to assure Middle East allies that the Iran nuclear deal would make them safer, as he began a regional tour in the Egyptian capital yesterday.

Kerry met his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry to patch up troubled relations between the two countries with a pledge of support.

He later met President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi before flying to Qatar to meet Gulf Arab counterparts.

Egypt, and other countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia, are suspicious of Iran, which they view as bent on destabilising their countries.

"There can be absolutely no question that if the Vienna plan is fully implemented, it will make Egypt and all the countries of this region safer than they otherwise would be or were," Kerry told a joint Cairo press conference with Shoukry.

"The United States and Egypt recognise

that Iran is engaged in destabilising activities in the region -- and that is why it is so important to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme remains wholly peaceful," he said.



Washington had frozen arms deliveries to Cairo following the crackdown on Islamist president Mohamed Morsi's supporters, but resumed aid in March and delivered a batch of F-16 jets to Egypt last week.

However, Kerry spoke of the need for a "balance" between fighting militants and respecting human rights in Egypt.

The United States' renewed support to Egypt is also fuelled by the rise of ISIS-affiliated militants in Sinai Peninsula.

Kerry's trip, which ends on August 8, will not include Israel, one of Washington's closest allies, which has been a fierce critic of the July 14 nuclear deal between the world powers and Iran.

In Doha, Kerry will meet his counterparts from the six Gulf Cooperation Council



No plane link to new metal debris: report

AFP, Saint-andré

A fevered hunt for more wreckage from missing flight MH370 on La Reunion island turned up no new clues yesterday as authorities said metallic debris found by locals did not come from an airplane.

Locals on La Reunion island have been combing the shores since a wing part was found last Wednesday, handing over bits of what they believe to be wreckage to police. Yesterday morning several pieces of debris sparked excitement, one of which was believed by locals to be from a plane door.

However investigators quickly shot down hopes. Malaysian authority told AFP one item "was actually from a domestic ladder. It is not a door."

The plane disappeared on March 8, 2014, en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai yesterday confirmed that the wing part had been "officially identified" as from a Boeing 777 -- making it virtually certain that it was from missing MH370. Flight MH370 is the only Boeing 777 to ever be lost at sea.

Scientists say it is plausible that ocean currents carried a piece of the wreckage as far as La Reunion. However authorities have warned that even if the debris confirmed to come from MH370 it is unlikely to completely clear up one of aviation's greatest puzzles. The mystery of what happened to the plane and where it went down exactly are still likely to persist unless the black box is found.

FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE Obama to unveil 'biggest step ever'

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama was to unveil yesterday what he called the "biggest, most important step we've ever taken" to fight climate change, a sensitive issue central to his legacy.

The White House will release the final version of America's Clean Power Plan, a set of environmental rules and regulations that will home in on the pollution from the nation's existing power plants, setting limits on power-plant carbon emissions for the first time.

The revised Clean Power Plan will seek to slash carbon emissions from the power sector 32 percent from 2005 levels in 2030, a 9 percent increase over a previous proposal.

The regulation will usher in a sweeping transformation of the US electricity sector, encouraging an aggressive shift toward more renewable energy away from coal-fired electricity.

"My administration will release the final version of America's Clean Power Plan, the biggest, most important step we have ever taken to combat climate change," Obama said in a video posted by the White House Sunday at midnight.

The plan will be central to the United States' contribution to a United Nations agreement to tackle climate change, in which the Obama administration has vowed to play a leadership role.



UAE to try 41 for seeking 'caliphate'

AFP, Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates is to try 41 people for allegedly seeking to overthrow the government to set up an Islamic State group-style caliphate in the Gulf state, prosecutors said yesterday.

Such mass trials on terrorism charges are rare in the UAE which has largely been spared the Islamic militancy that has hit other Arab states.

The suspects, who include Emiratis as well as foreigners, are accused of setting up a group "with a terrorist, takfiri (Sunni Muslim extremist) ideology," in a bid to "seize power and establish a caliphate," the prosecutor general said.

They are accused of setting up cells to train members in handling weapons and the manufacture of explosives in preparation for attacks on UAE soil.

Prosecutors charge that they were "in contact with foreign terrorist organisations... to help them achieve their goals."

The UAE is part of the US-led coalition that has been carrying out air strikes against IS in Syria since September last year and has upped security measures since the wave of Arab Spring protests that swept the region four years ago.

In July, following the murder of an American teacher in an Abu Dhabi mall, authorities enacted tougher anti-terror legislation, including harsher jail terms and even introducing the death penalty for crimes linked to religious hatred and "takfiri groups".



A large plume of smoke rises from the Rocky Fire near Clearlake, California on Saturday. Over 1,900 firefighters are battling the Rocky Fire that burned over 22,000 acres since it started on Wednesday afternoon. The fire is currently five percent contained and has destroyed at least 14 homes.

PHOTO: AFP

BENAZIR BHUTTO ASSASSINATION ISI chief advised her 'not to attend rally'

DAWN ONLINE

The security officer of former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto has told an anti-terrorism court that the director general of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in 2007 had advised her hours before her assassination not to attend the public meeting at Liaquat Bagh.

Recording his statement recently before the ATC in Rawalpindi, then senior superintendent of police, retired Major Irtiaz Hussain, said ISI director general Lt Gen Nadeem Taj and Maj Gen Ehsan met Bhutto on the night between Dec 26 and 27, 2007, to discuss her security.

He said Lt Gen Taj and Maj Gen Ehsan tried to persuade Bhutto not to address the Liaquat Bagh rally. "The former prime minister had told me that intelligence agencies, the ISI chief and Maj Gen Ehsan had informed her about the security threat to her life," he said.

A retired army officer privy to the development told Dawn that the ISI chief's meeting with Bhutto lasted a couple of hours. The army had received information from different sources, including intercepts, that suicide bombers had entered Rawalpindi and they could kill Bhutto before, during or after the public meeting and that the information was passed on to the late PPP leader, he added.



TERRITORIAL ROW Asean, China discuss 'hotline'

AFP, Manila

ASEAN and China are discussing setting up a "hotline" in case of an emergency regarding the territorial dispute over the South China Sea, a Philippine official said yesterday.

The proposed hotline was discussed during a meeting of senior diplomats from China and ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in Tianjin last week, said foreign department spokesman Charles Jose.

Jose said the matter had been referred back to a joint working group and was still far from fruition.

The Philippines and fellow Asean members Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam have competing claims over the South China Sea along with China and Taiwan.

As weird as it gets

Hong Kong protests over 'breast assault'

Dozens of activists including men wearing bras staged a protest in Hong Kong yesterday after a woman was sentenced to three-and-a-half months' jail for assaulting a police officer with her breast. Around 100 people gathered for the light-hearted "breast walk" protest outside police headquarters in Wan Chai district, with some holding up bras and others wearing them over their tops. "We better watch out as one day police might accuse us of attacking with our penis or buttock," a topless male activist wearing a black bra told the crowd. Retired teacher James Hon, 66, wearing a pink bra over his white polo shirt, told AFP: "It's the first time to wear a bra in my entire life." "We have come to this rather odd method to tell the world how ridiculous it is," he said. Thirty-year-old Ng Lai-ying was sentenced on Thursday for "assaulting a police officer" during a chaotic protest against mainland Chinese cross-border traders in March. The clerk was found guilty of using her chest to bump against the arm of chief inspector Chan Ka-po. She was bailed pending an appeal.

AFP, Hong Kong



Kim Jong-un gets global statesmanship prize

Kim Jong-un has been awarded a prize for global statesmanship. The North Korean dictator is to receive the award from the Bali-based Sukarno Centre. The news was announced by the daughter of Indonesia's founding president, after whom the award is named. Rachmawati Soekarnoputri said: "We will give the award to President Kim Jong-un because he has been consistent in carrying out the ideals of the great leader, Kim Il Sung, which is to fight imperialism. So this will be a sequel, where we give the award to Kim Jong-un for his persistence in fighting neo-colonialism." Other previous recipients of the award have included Mahatma Gandhi and Aung San Suu Kyi. In June, the country was widely ridiculed when it announced it had invented a wonder drug capable of curing Aids, Ebola and cancer. The dictatorship is known for making outlandish claims about its own prowess. The state also claims that Kim Jong-il invented the hamburger and had magical powers which meant he did not need to use the toilet.

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NEWSIN brief

Al-Jazeera verdict delayed again

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court yesterday postponed for a second time its verdict in the retrial of three Al-Jazeera journalists, rescheduling it for August 29 in a move the defendants called an insult. Canadian-Egyptian Mohamed Fahmy, Egyptian Baher Mohamed and Australian Peter Greste were sentenced to up to 10 years in prison in July 2014. Their convictions for spreading false news were overturned and they were freed in February to await retrial.

Top Burundi general assassinated

AFP, Bujumbura

A top Burundian general and close aide to President Pierre Nkurunziza was killed yesterday in a rocket attack on his car in the capital Bujumbura, officials and witnesses said. The general killed, Adolphe Nshimirimana, was widely seen as the crisis-hit central African nation's de facto internal security chief and even considered the regime's number two. The assassination comes just over a week after Nkurunziza was declared the outright winner of

Migrant crisis: France, UK urge EU action

BBC ONLINE

The UK and France have urged other EU nations to help address the root causes of the Calais migrant crisis. In the Sunday Telegraph, Home Secretary Theresa May and her French counterpart Bernard Cazeneuve said it was part of a "global migration crisis". There have been thousands of attempts by migrants to access the Eurotunnel terminal in the last week.

Aussie speaker resigns over expenses scandal

BBC ONLINE

The speaker of the lower house of the Australian parliament, Bronwyn Bishop, has resigned over an expenses scandal. Bishop, an ally of Prime Minister Tony Abbott, had used AU\$5,000 (£2,300) in public funds to charter a helicopter to attend a political fundraiser. She also claimed expenses for attending colleagues' weddings.

Biden mulling White House run: NYT

AFP, Washington

Vice President Joe Biden is actively exploring a possible presidential run, a move which would jolt the Democratic field and its frontrunner Hillary Clinton. The New York Times reported Saturday. Also Saturday, Times columnist Maureen Dowd reported that Biden had been holding meetings at his residence, "talking to friends, family and donors about jumping in" to challenge Clinton in Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two nominating states.