

NEWS IN brief

China to donate fuel to Nepal

China will supply Nepal with 1.3 million litres of fuel to ease crippling shortages after protests over a new constitution blocked imports from India, a Nepali official said yesterday. India has had a monopoly on Nepal's fuel supplies for decades but tensions over the blockade have prompted Kathmandu to turn to New Delhi's rival China.

US 'drunk driver' kills 4 at university rally

A car travelling at high speed driven by a suspected drunk driver has crashed into a crowd of spectators during a university parade in the US state of Oklahoma, killing four people and injuring 44 others, police said on Saturday. A local woman, 25, has been arrested.

Eurosceptics poised to win Polish polls

Polish voters began voting yesterday in a general election expected to end eight years of centrist government, with surveys showing the eurosceptic conservatives firmly ahead. The opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party commands an 8-to-12 point poll lead over the liberal, pro-European Civic Platform (PO) party.

Ukraine rebels ban MSF for 'espionage'

Pro-Russian insurgents in Ukraine's eastern separatist Donetsk region yesterday said they had banned Doctors Without Borders (MSF) from working in the area for alleged espionage activity and other crimes. The Nobel Peace Prize winning organisation was kicked out of Donetsk along with nine other Western aid groups.

India nods to women's combat role in army

The Indian government gave its nod Saturday for women to fly fighter jets, paving the way for them to assume combat roles for the first time in one of the world's largest militaries. The federal defence ministry gave the green light to a proposal for recruiting female fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force.

Argentina votes for next president

Polling stations opened and Argentines began voting for their next president yesterday, in an election that will bring an end to 12 years under power couple Nestor and Cristina Kirchner. Their heir apparent, Buenos Aires provincial governor Daniel Scioli, is poised to come out on top, polling ahead of rival and Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri.

EU, Balkans wrangle over refugees

Thousands stranded at borders brace for winter amid border closing threats

European Union and Balkan leaders faced a make-or-break summit yesterday on the deepening refugee crisis after three frontline states threatened to close their borders if their EU peers stopped accepting migrants. The mini summit, called by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, groups the heads of 10 EU nations, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and leaders of Albania, Serbia and Macedonia.

putting up a fence along its border with Croatia, with the migrants re-routing through tiny Slovenia. In an interview with the Kronen Zeitung daily, Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann said the summit had to be "ready to react" against possible violence.

In an interview published yesterday by the German newspaper Bild, Juncker urged countries to stop handing on migrants to neighbour-

Schengen at risk," Juncker said, referring to the EU's border-free zone.

The EU is facing record arrivals with more than 60,000 people in the last week entering Slovenia, which has a population of just two million, and 48,000 entering Greece, which has a population of 11 million, according to official figures.

With winter looming, Amnesty International on Saturday warned of a humanitarian disaster if migrants are stranded at borders.

An unprecedented 670,000 people mainly fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have flooded into Europe so far this year in the biggest movement of its kind since World War II.

At least three migrants -- two children and a woman -- drowned yesterday when their boat sank off the Greek island of Lesbos, the coast-guard said. Around a dozen others, mostly Afghans, are still missing after the rickety vessel, carrying 60 people, went down at dawn.

Meanwhile, the bodies of 29 people thought to be African migrants have been discovered on beaches around a city 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of Tripoli, the Red Crescent said.

MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE



Children cry amongst the crowds yesterday as migrants and refugees prepare to board a train heading to Serbia from the Macedonian-Greek border.

would "either consolidate the unity of Europe or watch the slow decomposition of the EU."

Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner told the same daily that migrants were showing growing discontent and the police

ing states in chaotic conditions. Member states "must take care to uphold orderly procedures and conditions," he said.

"The European Commission expects everyone to obey the rules of the game if we don't want to put

Hurricane Patricia spares Mexico

Patricia flattened a fishing hamlet on Mexico's Pacific coast, but authorities were relieved to see Saturday that the record-breaking hurricane largely spared the country and dissipated as it moved north.

The wood and brick homes with tin and palm leaf roofs of 40 families in the village of Chamela were blown away when Patricia made landfall as a Category Five monster in Jalisco state late Friday. The families survived because they evacuated to a shelter before landfall, which occurred just 20 kilometers to the south.

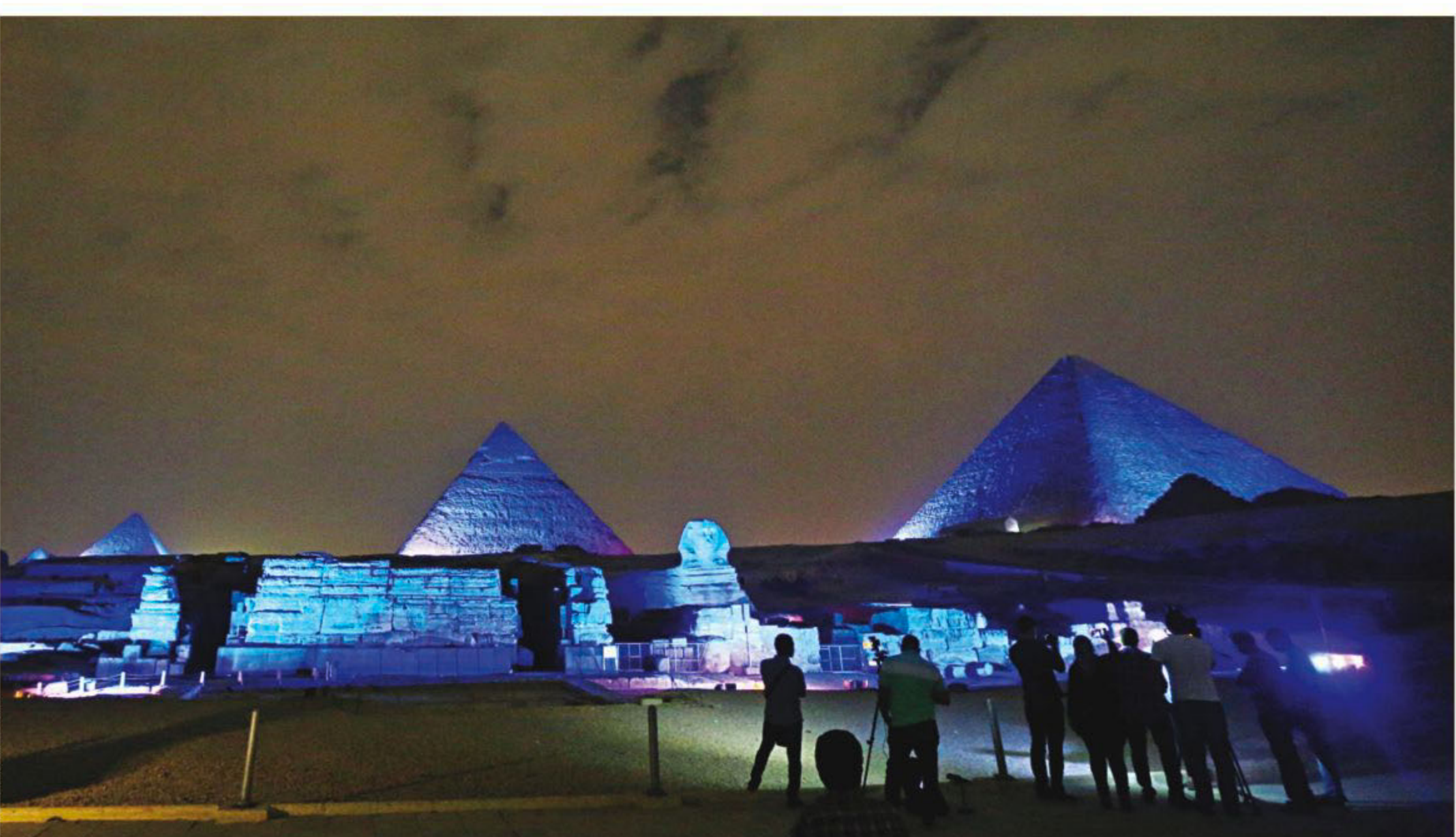
The villagers returned to pick up the pieces on Saturday and complained that the government has not provided any help. While the residents of Chamela lost nearly everything, most of the region incredibly suffered relatively little damage and the authorities rejoiced that no deaths were reported.

President Enrique Pena Nieto lifted the hurricane alert for Jalisco, Colima and Nayarit states as he visited the region, saying that the damage was "smaller than expected."

"Maybe (the warnings) were exaggerated, but it's better to be warned," said Ruben Fregoso, a restaurant owner who reopened his business after the storm.

Transport Minister Gerardo Ruiz Esparza said Mexico was saved because the population was well prepared and the hurricane was slowed by the Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range.

"We were lucky that the impact was diverted" toward the mountains, he said. "Nature was kind-hearted."



The Great Pyramids and Sphinx are lit up in blue light during a celebration for the 70th anniversary of the United Nations in Giza, Egypt, on Saturday. More than 200 iconic monuments, buildings, statues, bridges, and other landmarks in nearly 60 countries across the globe are lit up blue on UN Day.

Fresh clashes despite peace push

Woman 'knife attacker' shot dead; US to cut aid to Palestinians

Fresh violence flared between Israelis and Palestinians yesterday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to install more security cameras at the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound in a bid to defuse tensions. Israel and Jordan on Saturday strike a deal on Jerusalem holy site.

He vowed Jews would continue to be allowed to visit but not pray at the compound and agreed that 24-hour surveillance cameras could be installed, adding these were in Israel's interest.

John Kerry on Saturday said Israel and Jordan have agreed on moves aimed at reducing tensions surrounding a prominent holy site in Jerusalem.

Kerry was speaking after talks in Jordan, the formal custodian of what is known to Jews as the Temple Mount and as Haram al-Sharif to Muslims, reports BBC.

"All the violence and the incitement to violence must stop. Leaders must lead," Kerry told reporters. The steps he announced include round-the-clock video monitoring and Israel's agreement to reaffirm Jordan's historic role as custodian of the religious complex.

ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE

because of "unhelpful actions" by the Palestinians.

A specialised news site, al-Monitor, earlier said the US State Department intends to reduce aid for the West Bank and Gaza in fiscal 2016 from \$370 million (335 million euros) to \$290 million. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State

Ukraine holds key local polls

Western-backed Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's fragile ruling coalition faced a major survival test yesterday in local elections swiftly marred by polls failing to open in the strategic port of Mariupol. The elections come during a lull in fighting with pro-Russian rebels, who control parts of the country's east, as fears grow in Kiev that Ukraine is slipping off the global radar.

Meanwhile, direct fights between Ukraine and Russia were grounded yesterday as mistrust between the uneasy ex-Soviet neighbours boiled over into a new trade war that affects tens of thousands of families.

'Eradicate terror' for political deal

Says Assad; rebels slam his new polls pledges as Russia steps up diplomacy

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad yesterday said his country must "eradicate terrorism" to find a political solution to its civil war, as he reportedly expressed a willingness to hold new elections. Meeting a Russian parliamentary delegation as Moscow steps up efforts for a political deal, Assad emphasised the need for greater security.

"The eradication of terrorist organisations will lead to the political solution that Syria and Russia seek and that will satisfy the Syrian people and preserve Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity," state news agency SANA quoted Assad as saying.

The visit by Russian lawmakers came days after Assad's own surprise trip to Moscow for talks with President Vladimir Putin.

That trip and ramped-up Russian diplomacy have led to speculation that Moscow is pushing for a new political agreement to end the conflict that began with protests against Assad's rule in March 2011.

But the shape of any such deal remains unclear, with Syria's opposition firmly against Moscow leading peace efforts while pursuing an air campaign it launched in support of Assad on September 30.

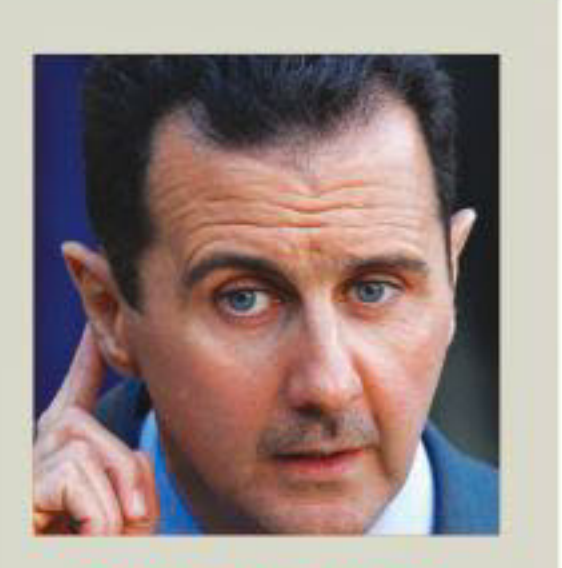
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday that Syria needed to begin preparing for new elections. But that idea has been slammed by rebels.

Rebel forces were equally dismissive of Lavrov's offer Saturday of Russian support for "patriotic" opposition forces fighting against the Islamic State group.

While Russia says its aerial campaign launched last month is targeting IS and other "terrorists," moderate and Islamist rebels say they have been the real focus, not the jihadists.

Meanwhile, the leader of the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda has reportedly been killed in Aleppo.

Opposition figures told The Independent that three senior members of Jabhat al-Nusra had been killed, but could not confirm if any of them were the jihadist group's leader Abu Suleiman al-Masri.



WAR IN SYRIA Russia says ready to help rebels against ISIS Al-Nusra chief reportedly killed in Aleppo

'Russia planned to drop nukes on London'

A possible Russian plot to drop nuclear bombs on London during the Cold War has been revealed.

The top-secret letter of a British atomic expert warning the authorities of a possible attack in 1954 has been shown for the first time, the Mirror has reported.

The National Archives released the handwritten letter from William Penney, an atomic bomb expert who died in 1991, which alleges a Russian attack was planned.

He told Atomic Energy Authority chairman Edwin Plowden that the bombs would fall on Croydon in south London, Uxbridge in the west and Romford in the east.

"Instead of using, say, 32 bombs on London, they would probably use three, four or five very powerful ones which would give the same total damage but need not be aimed accurately," he wrote according to the Mirror.

The Russian head of state from 1924 to 1953 was Joseph Stalin, and from 1954 to 1963 it was Nikita Khrushchev.

Saudi king facing palace coup!

Report says eight brothers of King Salman want to oust him

The revelation suggests there is increasing pressure within the normally secretive Saudi royal family to bring to a head the internal power

family members and the Kingdom's religious establishment spoke with one voice and withdrew their support. The prince says something similar is going to happen again soon.



Eight of the 12 surviving sons of Saudi Arabia's founding monarch are supporting a move to oust King Salman, 79, the country's ailing ruler, and replace him with his 73-year-old brother, according to a dissident prince.

The prince also claims that a clear majority of the country's powerful Islamic clerics, known as the Ulama, would back a palace coup to oust the current King and install Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, a former Interior Minister, in his place. "The Ulama and religious people prefer Prince Ahmed -- not all of them, but 75 percent," said the prince, himself a grandson of King Ibn Saud, who founded the ruling dynasty in 1932.

Support from the clerics would be vital for any change of monarch, since in the Saudi system only they have the power to confer religious and therefore political legitimacy on the leadership.

struggle that has erupted since King Salman inherited the throne at the beginning of this year. The prince, who cannot be named for security reasons, is the author of two recently published letters calling for the royal family to replace the current Saudi leadership.

In 1964 King Saud was finally deposed after a long power struggle, when the majority of senior royal

"Either the King will leave Saudi Arabia, like King Saud, and he will be very respected inside and outside the country," he told The Independent. "Alternatively Prince Ahmed will become Crown Prince, but with control of and responsibility for the whole country -- the economy, oil, armed forces, national guard, interior ministry, secret service, in fact everything from A to Z."

Unhappiness at King Salman's own diminishing faculties -- he is reported to be suffering from Alzheimer's disease -- has been compounded by his controversial appointments, the continuing and costly war in Yemen and the recent Hajj disaster.

The Saudi embassy in London did not respond to a request for comment.