

NEWS IN
brief

Brazil mine mudslide kills at least 17

AFP, Rio De Janeiro
A dam burst Thursday at a mining waste site in Brazil, unleashing a deluge of thick, red toxic mud that smothered a village and killed at least 17 people, an official said. More than 50 more were injured in the disaster in southeastern Minas Gerais state, said Adao Severino Junior, fire chief in the city of Mariana.

Curfew, mass arrests in Indian Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar
Authorities ordered a curfew in parts of Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday after hundreds of separatist activists were arrested on the eve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the disputed region. In the main city of Srinagar shops and schools remained shut, university exams were cancelled for the day and public transport was suspended as hundreds of police and paramilitary forces patrolled the streets. Modi is scheduled to address a public rally in Srinagar on Saturday.

Pakistan to get \$502m IMF loan

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan will receive the next instalment worth \$502 million of its loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in December as part of a three-year economic bailout package, officials said. The IMF's Pakistan delegation head Harald Finger said in a statement late Thursday that the decision was taken after a successful review of Pakistan's economic performance.

Chhota Rajan arrives back in India

AFP, New Delhi
An alleged Indian gangster on the run for more than 20 years arrived in New Delhi on Friday after being deported from Indonesia where he was arrested, Indian police said. Rajan is suspected of involvement in dozens of crimes, including murder, extortion and drug trafficking, and had been evading police in several countries for years, with Interpol flagging him as a wanted man back in 1995.

Turkey nabs IS suspects ahead of G20

AFP, Ankara
Turkish police swooped on Islamic State suspects in the Mediterranean resort of Antalya yesterday, barely 10 days ahead of a summit of world leaders, local media reported. Turkey also deported a group of Moroccans detained on suspicion they were planning to head to Syria to join Islamic State fighters, reports said.



Tourists wait at the airport of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh yesterday. Britain moved to repatriate thousands of tourists from Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh after warnings a "terrorist bomb" may have brought down a Russian jet that took off from the resort, as several nervous airlines scrapped their flights.

PHOTO: AFP

Germany to fast-track asylum returns

Canada ready to settle 25,000 Syrian refugees
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Germany is to speed up the repatriation of failed asylum seekers, after the governing coalition resolved a rift on the issue. Chancellor Angela Merkel said five special centres would handle the applications of asylum-seekers deemed to have little chance of staying. Her Christian Democrats and their junior partners, the Social Democrats, have argued for weeks over the plan. Germany says it expects to receive at least 800,000 asylum seekers this year. Earlier, the European Commission said that three million migrants were likely to arrive in Europe by the end of 2017, reports BBC. Canada's new prime minister Thursday vowed to make good on campaign promises to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the beginning of next year and bring home fighters battling the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. In his first interview since taking office on Wednesday, Justin Trudeau told the Radio-Canada network: "The goal is still to have 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada before January 1." Several government ministries have been mobilized to achieve this goal in such a short time, Trudeau said, adding the federal government would have to work closely with Canada's provinces and municipalities. The refugees must be given ways to support their families once they reach Canada so they can benefit their community and the country as a whole, just like the "waves of immigrants and refugees that did so earlier," Trudeau said. He also said his defense minister, Harjit Sajjan, was working to bring home Canadian warplanes from the fight against IS in Iraq and Syria.

Mustard gas used in Syria

Confirms global chemical weapons watchdog; France deploys aircraft carrier to fight IS in Syria, Iraq

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Mustard gas was used during summer fighting in Syria but it was not clear by whom, the global chemical weapons watchdog said Thursday, while jihadists seized a key town from regime forces. The deadly gas was used in the flashpoint town of Marea in the northern province of Aleppo on August 21, a source from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) told AFP. "We have determined the facts, but we have not determined who was responsible," the source said. Meanwhile, France has announced that it will deploy its only aircraft carrier to boost its efforts in the fight against IS. In a statement by the French presidency following a meeting of its defence cabinet, the government said the Charles de Gaulle warship would

be sent to the eastern Mediterranean for operations against IS in both Syria and Iraq, reports Independent. "The deployment of the battle group alongside the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier has been decided to



participate in operations against Daesch and its affiliate groups," the statement said after a defence cabinet meeting, referring to the Arabic acronym for Islamic State. The Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights said yesterday air strikes by Russian warplanes on the Islamic State-held Syrian city of Raqqa killed 42 people earlier this week, including 27 civilians. Fifteen Islamic State fighters made up the remainder of the death toll, the Britain-based Observatory said, after a series of strikes on Tuesday that hit the group's Syrian stronghold, reports Reuters. Allegations that jihadist militants have been using chemical arms have been increasing in recent months in both Iraq and Syria. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said it had treated four civilians from one family. Patients at an MSF hospital in Aleppo said they saw a "yellow gas" when a mortar round hit their house. Syrian rebels and aid groups said that at the end of August dozens of people were affected by a chemical attack on Marea, where moderate opposition rebels and militants from the Islamic State (IS) group were battling.

Suu Kyi eyes historic win as polls campaign ends

Myanmar defends rights record, vows credible polls

AFP, Yangon
Myanmar's boisterous election campaign drew to a close yesterday, two days before milestone polls that could finally propel Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party to power after a decades-long struggle against the military. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) is eyeing an outright majority at Sunday's general election, the first the party has contested since 1990. Myanmar was ruled for half a century by a brutal and isolationist junta which crushed pro-democracy movements through a combination of violent crackdowns and political chicanery. But in 2011 the military unexpectedly ceded power to a quasi-civilian government led by former top-ranking general President Thein Sein. The wave of reforms that followed loosened the military's chokehold on the nation. A free press has flourished since, most political prisoners have been released and

the economy is creeping back to life in lockstep with the rollback of most international sanctions. But the ruling, army-backed Union and Solidarity Development Party (USDP) is the main obstacle to a historic NLD win. Meanwhile, Myanmar defended its human rights record yesterday, two days before a landmark election, as Western powers including the United States and Britain voiced serious concern over persisting violations. "Myanmar is changing for the better in all sectors and with full transparency," legal advisor to the presidency, Sit Aye, told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as a delegation from the country insisted they had addressed the international community's major concerns. The country yesterday was undergoing a so-called Universal Periodic Review of its rights record before the UN's top rights body -- which all 193 UN countries must submit to every four years.



War with India not an option

Says Pakistan PM

IANS, Islamabad
Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has asserted that war with India was not an option, media reported yesterday. During a meeting here on Thursday with President Mamnoon Hussain, Sharif affirmed Pakistan's desire for friendly ties with India, all its neighbours and the world at large for sustainable development, The Nation reported. The prime minister said the US and world powers wanted Pakistan-India dialogue to resume and added that Pakistan "has always been for talks". An official statement issued after the meeting said, "They discussed the regional situation and reiterated Pakistan's resolve to have friendly relations with all the neighbouring countries." Relations between Pakistan and India are at their lowest ebb these days as the two sides blame each other for firing along the line of control (LoC) and the international boundary. The growing tension has so far seen cancellation of bilateral meetings and a war of words between the traditional rivals. The two neighbours are, however, in contact through the back-channel but there has hardly been any positive news for peace-lovers on both sides.



An anti-capitalist protester wearing a Guy Fawkes mask holds a placard as he stands alongside a burning police car during the "Million Masks March", organised by the group Anonymous, in London on Thursday. The protest was held on the night of Britain's Guy Fawkes Night, and many of the marchers wore the white masks of the man who plotted to blow up parliament in 1605, now associated with Anonymous.

PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian shot dead in Gaza clashes

AFP, Gaza City
Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip yesterday during clashes along the border, the enclave's health ministry said. Salame Abu Jamaa, 23, was shot in the head during a protest east of Khan Yunis, health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said. The Israeli army confirmed they had shot a suspect, saying they responded after Palestinians tried to breach the buffer zone between Gaza and Israel. "The forces called the perpetrators to halt, followed by warning shots in the air, and upon the suspects' continued assault, forces fired toward a main instigator, confirming a hit," a spokeswoman told AFP. Seventy-three Palestinians, including alleged attackers, and an Arab-Israeli have been killed since a wave of violence began on October 1. Nine Israelis have died. The unrest and attacks began in and around Jerusalem and the West Bank, but later spread to Gaza, hit by three wars with Israel since 2008 and where Palestinians have protested against Israel's ongoing blockade of the enclave. There were also sporadic clashes in the West Bank city of Hebron on Friday following the weekly Muslim prayers, where one protestor was wounded in the head by a rubber bullet. In Ramallah, also in the West Bank, Palestinians throwing stones clashed with Israeli troops next to the adjacent Israeli settlement of Psagot. Meanwhile, an Egyptian naval patrol shot dead a Palestinian fisherman and wounded another Thursday off the coast near the border between Hamas-ruled Gaza and Egypt, a Gaza health ministry spokesman said.

First family home rebuilt year after Gaza war

AFP, Gaza City
For over a year Atef al-Zaza and his family have been waiting to move back into their Gaza home, flattened like thousands of others in last year's devastating war with Israel. Now it has become the first in the ravaged coastal strip to be completely rebuilt, just in time for the wet and windy Gaza winter. The 50-day war in July-August 2014 killed 2,200 Palestinians, 73 people on the Israeli side, and destroyed or damaged thousands of homes in the besieged Gaza Strip. Until now the only repairs had been to buildings which were partially damaged, while the Zaza home -- in the particularly hard-hit Shejaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City -- was completely obliterated. Since then, Atef al-Zaza, 49, and the 11 members of his family have stayed with relatives and for a while in a small rented apartment. Now he proudly shows visitors the brand new, 160 square metre house, surrounded by the rubble of neighbours' homes yet to be reconstructed. In Gaza, violence is never far away and a few hundred metres (yards) from the Zaza home young Palestinian stone-throwers clash daily with Israeli soldiers on the other side of the border fence. The UN Relief and Works Agency, tasked with caring for Palestinian refugees who make up 75 percent of the strip's population, says 9,000 of their homes were totally destroyed in the Israeli bombardment and tens of thousands damaged. Some of those now rebuilding are doing so for the third time, UNRWA spokesman Adnan Abu Hasna said, referring to previous Gaza wars in 2008 and 2012. The task is fraught with obstacles; the Gaza Strip is subject to blockades by both Israel and Egypt, between which it is sandwiched.

Maldives police raid private TV station

AFP, Malé
Police in the Maldives yesterday raided a private television station in connection with a YouTube video that allegedly threatened President Abdulla Yameen, the network's managing director said. The move came days after President Yameen imposed a state of emergency, giving wider powers to police and armed forces to arrest and suspending freedom of assembly and freedom of movement. Police yesterday stopped Sangu TV from broadcasting and searched its studios in the capital island Male in a pre-dawn raid, removing computer hard disks.

Border crackdown deepens constitutional standoff

REUTERS, Birgunj
Nepal's busiest entry point for goods from India has witnessed a new wave of unrest after police failed to clear a border blockade, the attempt only strengthening the resolve of protesters to fight the Himalayan nation's new constitution. Knots of demonstrators gathered around piles of smoldering tires in Birgunj, the latest flashpoint in agitation across the southern Tarai-Madhes strip, speaking of their anger at a federal setup enshrined in the new **NEPAL CRISIS** basic law. The lowlanders, many of them ethnically distinct from Nepal's hill and mountain groups, complain their region has been carved up, denying them a say in running the nation of 28 million as it seeks a new start after years of instability. Stones and pieces of brick littered the streets around a clock tower on Thursday, marking where police had fought previous battles with protesters. Burned-out cars and motorbikes lay by the side of the road to the deserted bus station. "We light fires in the morning, they (the police) come in the day and shout abuse at us, charge us with batons and shoot tear gas or bullets. We throw stones back, and sometimes petrol bombs," said Abdul Rahman at one of the fires in Birgunj. "All of us in this crowd voted for the mainstream parties in the last election after they promised to give us a Tarai province. Now we know they have lied to us, and we are out on the streets." The middle hills and the capital Kathmandu have suffered fuel and cooking gas shortages after protesters in the south switched to blocking supplies from India, Nepal's largest trading partner, almost two months ago. Many in Nepal accuse India of supporting the protesters - a charge New Delhi denies. India has expressed its dissatisfaction with parts of the constitution, although it also says it cannot allow trucks to enter Nepal while conditions are unsafe.