

NEWS IN brief

Maldives sacks chief prosecutor

AFP, Malé
The Maldives parliament sacked the chief prosecutor shortly after the government bowed to international pressure and lifted a state of emergency imposed after an alleged plot to blow up the president. At a hastily convened midnight session of parliament on Tuesday, ruling party legislators voted overwhelmingly to sack Prosecutor General Muhthaz Muhsin without disclosing the allegations against him.

Australia defends Christmas Island policy

AFP, Sydney
Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has defended Australia's hardline policy on asylum-seekers against criticism from the United Nations, particularly from countries such as North Korea. The UN's top human rights body took Australia to task on Monday over its policies of sending refugees to offshore Pacific islands and turning back boatloads of asylum-seekers to other countries.

Five dead in PKK attacks in Turkey

AFP, Diyarbakir
Three Turkish policemen, a civilian and a soldier have been killed in new attacks in the restive southeast blamed on fighters from the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), security sources said yesterday. The police officers were killed and another was wounded late Tuesday when they came under fire from rockets and automatic rifles while patrolling the largely Kurdish town of Silopi near the Syrian border, the sources told AFP.

Spain challenges Catalan secession bid

AFP, Madrid
Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said yesterday his government had launched a Constitutional Court challenge to a resolution passed by Catalonia's parliament on splitting from the rest of the country. Lawyers for the state have asked the court to "immediately suspend this resolution and all of its effects," he told a news conference following an emergency cabinet meeting.

Nigeria gets cabinet ministers

AFP, Abuja
Nigeria yesterday finally got a new government after more than five months of waiting, as 36 ministers and junior ministers swore the oath of allegiance and were assigned formal roles. The ceremony at President Muhammadu Buhari's official residence in the capital, Abuja, brought to an end 166 days in which he has effectively been in sole charge of Africa's leading economy.



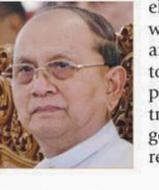
Hand fans with portraits of Myanmar's National League for Democracy leader Suu Kyi are put on sale outside the party headquarters in Yangon yesterday. The NLD swept the national election with a landslide victory that marks a new era for democracy in Myanmar after decades of army rule.

PHOTO: AFP

British PM calls vote 'a triumph' for Myanmar

President Thein Sein congratulates Suu Kyi's NLD on its success in polls

AGENCIES
British Prime Minister David Cameron has praised Myanmar's landmark elections as an important step toward democracy and "a triumph for Burmese people, who have clearly voiced their desire for change."



Myanmar, a former British colony, was previously known as Burma. The British Embassy yesterday issued a statement with Cameron's response to the election, as results continued to indicate a massive victory by opposition leader Suu Kyi. Cameron said the sight of thousands lined up to vote during Sunday's election, some for the first time in their lives, was "a moving moment demonstrating the remarkable progress Burma has made in recent years."

He welcomed the comments of independent election observers that the

election was "a generally well-run polling process" and called on all parties to work together for a peaceful and orderly transition as the new government is formed, reports AP. Meanwhile, Myanmar President Thein Sein has congratulated Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party on its success in polls, a spokesman told the BBC. With about 40% of seats declared, the National League for Democracy (NLD) has taken nearly 90% of the vote. Suu Kyi has written to the leadership requesting talks on national reconciliation. But spokesman U Ye Htut said such a meeting could only take place after the final results were announced. "Our message to the people of the country on behalf of U Thein Sein is that President U Thein Sein wants to congratulate the Myanmar people for the free and fair and very peaceful election day," UYe Htut told the BBC.

No immediate way forward for ME peace

Says Israeli PM in Washington

AFP, Washington
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on a visit to Washington, on Tuesday voiced pessimism about the prospect of peace with the Palestinians, suggesting the current stalemate was likely to remain in place. A peace process to end nearly 70 years of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has stalled for more than a year, when the latest US attempt at mediation failed. "Any deal, or any arrangement, unilateral or negotiated, must have Israel maintain the ability to defend itself by itself against threat, including from territories that are ceded," Netanyahu said. "That's the most important provision," he added. "That is something that I don't see the Palestinians accepting now." The Israeli leader, known to be aligned with Republicans in Congress, was speaking at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in the US capital. His comments came amid growing violence that has raised fears over the potential for a new Palestinian uprising. The unrest has seen 10 Israelis and at least 77 people on the Palestinian side -- one of them an Israeli Arab -- killed since October 1. Netanyahu said that his settlement freeze "didn't help" in restarting peace talks, adding that Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas "didn't come to the table."

SYRIA CONFLICT

Russia reveals peace talk plan

Calls for elections including Assad, opposition groups

BBC ONLINE
A Russian document circulating at the United Nations has proposed a constitutional reform process in Syria, lasting 18 months, to be followed by presidential elections. The document does not say whether Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should remain in power during that time. It says certain Syrian opposition groups should take part in key talks on the crisis in Vienna on Saturday. The Syrian army meanwhile has broken a siege in the north. Army units fought their way to Kwaikairi airbase, east of Aleppo, and eliminated large numbers of Islamic State (IS) militants, reports said. The facility had been under attack by IS jihadists for nearly two years. It represents a victory for regime forces which have struggled to advance even since Russia added its firepower to the conflict at the end of September, flying hundreds of sorties in that time. Russian planes targeted IS-controlled areas in Aleppo province and other targets in the Damascus countryside yesterday, reported the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. At least 22 people were killed and many more wounded by rebel shellfire in the Mediterranean city of Latakia on



Tuesday, state media and activists say. Latakia, which lies in the heartland of President Assad's minority Alawite sect, has largely escaped the conflict that has devastated most of Syria and killed more than 250,000 people. A Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman said that the priority ahead of next Saturday's meeting should be to establish which Syrian opposition groups are to be regarded as partners in the process, and which are "terrorist" and unacceptable. The eight-point proposal drawn up by Russia is reported not to rule out President Assad's participation in the elections - something his enemies say is impossible if there is to be peace. "[The] popularly elected president of Syria will have the functions of commander-in-chief of the armed forces control of special services and foreign policy," the leaked document is quoted by news agencies as saying. It says that the reform process should not be chaired by President Assad, but by a candidate agreed upon by all sides.

Slovenia unrolls wire on Croatia border

18 migrants die as boat sinks off Turkey

AFP, Gibina
Slovenia's army yesterday began rolling out razor wire along the border with Croatia, in a move the government says will help it better manage the influx of migrants. Slovenia last month suddenly found itself on the Balkans route taken by thousands of migrants heading to northern Europe after Hungary sealed its borders with Croatia and Serbia. Prime Minister Miro Cerar had announced on Tuesday that Ljubljana planned to build "obstacles" along parts of its frontier with Croatia, an outer border of Europe's passport-free Schengen zone. "These obstacles, including fences if needed, will have the objective of directing migrants towards the border crossings. We are not closing our borders," Cerar had told a news conference. Meanwhile, 18 migrants, among them at least seven children, drowned yesterday when their boats sank off Turkey's Aegean coast while trying to make the short but perilous crossing to Greece, the latest fatalities in Europe's refugee crisis. In the deadliest incident, the coastguard said it recovered the bodies of 14 people from a wooden boat which was heading from the western province of Canakkale to the Greek island of Lesbos when it crashed into rocks and took on water.



Women chant slogans as they carry a coffin of one of the seven people who were killed by unknown militants, during a protest procession in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. Hundreds of members of Hazara ethnic minority demonstrated against government inaction over the killing of seven members of their community by Islamist militants.

PHOTO: REUTERS

REPUBLICAN DEBATE

Rivals trash Trump's migrant plan

AFP, Milwaukee
Donald Trump reiterated his pledge during Tuesday's Republican presidential debate to deport millions of undocumented workers, a plan trashed by rivals including Jeb Bush, who warned overzealous anti-immigrant sentiment would be a gift to Democrats. "We will have a wall. The wall will be built. The wall will be successful," Trump, the Republican frontrunner and real estate tycoon, said about the partition he has vowed to build on the southern US border with Mexico. Asked directly by a



JEWISH CENTRE MURDERS

US white supremacist sentenced to death

BBC ONLINE
A judge has sentenced a white supremacist to death for the killing of three people at two Jewish centres. Frazier Glenn Miller Jr, 74, targeted the sites in Kansas last year and will be put to death by lethal injection. Johnson County District Judge Thomas Kelly Ryan said: "Your attempt to bring hate to this community, to bring terror to this community, has failed." Miller responded to the sentence, by shouting "heil Hitler" before he was removed from the courtroom. He was convicted of one count of capital murder, three counts of attempted murder, and assault and weapons charges. Miller, also known as Frazier Glenn Cross, represented himself during the trial. He admitted to killing William Corporon, 69, and his grandson Reat Griffin Underwood, 14, outside the Jewish Community Centre in Overland Park, Kansas. Terri LaManno, 53, was killed outside a Jewish retirement centre. Miller told the jurors he "knew" they were going to put him on death row, and he did not care what sentence he would receive. He said he was motivated to kill Jews before he died because he believes they have too much power.



COLD WAR DIPLOMACY

Thatcher handbagged George HW Bush

MAIL ONLINE
Margaret Thatcher gave George H W Bush a trademark handbagging over Cold War diplomacy, which included a 'lecture on freedom' when he was the newly-elected US president, it has emerged. The former prime minister gave Bush a dressing-down over plans to remove US troops from Europe, and also warned him not to 'go wobbly' during the build-up to the Gulf War. The scolded president later observed that Thatcher 'talks all the time' and turned conversations into 'a one-way' street, but admired her for being 'principled'. The relationship between the 41st president and Thatcher has been laid bare in a new biography of Bush published this week. Thatcher had been in power 10 years by the time Bush was elected in 1988, and had a famously warm relationship with his predecessor Ronald Reagan. But Bush had a more difficult start in his dealings with Thatcher, who objected from the off to his plan to calm Cold War tensions by reducing the number of US troops stationed close to the Iron Curtain. When he told her he planned to remove as many as 20 percent of his forces from the continent, Thatcher sternly opposed him, saying: "We must not give on this... You are not going to give, are you?" She followed this with what the president remembers as 'a lecture on freedom' to hammer home her point. After the meeting he wrote: "My first impression: Margaret [is] principled, very difficult... She's a principled woman, and a good



UN chief calls for lifting of blockade

PTI, United Nations
Expressing concern over the obstruction of essential supplies to Nepal, UN chief Ban Ki-moon has called on "all sides" to lift the blockade at the Indo-Nepal border immediately invoking the landlocked country's right of free transit. "The Secretary-General indeed reiterates his concern over the obstruction of essential supplies on the Nepal-India border. Acute shortages in fuel supplies continue to impede planned deliveries to earthquake-affected villages in Nepal," Ban's spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters on Tuesday. He said humanitarian organisations urgently require fuel to maintain operations and deliver food, warm clothing and shelter materials to high altitude areas that will soon be cut off by harsh winter weather. "The Secretary-General underlines Nepal's right of free transit, as a landlocked nation as well as for humanitarian reasons, and calls on all sides to lift the obstructions without further delay," he said. India on Tuesday said Nepal's "internal factors" were responsible for the blockade on the border. The blockade began after Madhesi community -- who have cultural, linguistic and family ties to Indians living across the border -- began their protests over Nepal's Constitution.

