

NEWS IN brief

'Iran's missile test violated UN ban' REUTERS, United Nations Iran violated a UN Security Council resolution in October by test-firing a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, a team of sanctions monitors said, leading to calls in the US Congress on Tuesday for more sanctions on Tehran. The White House said it would not rule out additional steps against Iran over the test of the medium-range Emad rocket that could deliver a nuclear weapon.

SC moves to curb Delhi car pollution BBC ONLINE India's Supreme Court has announced a slew of measures to curb record air pollution levels in the capital, Delhi. It has ordered a temporary ban on the sale of large diesel vehicles and stopped trucks more than 10 years old from entering the city. Air pollution causes more than 600,000 premature deaths in India each year. India has 13 of the world's 20 most polluted cities, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported last year.

Two killed in Israeli raid in West Bank REUTERS, Ramallah Israeli security forces shot dead two Palestinians who tried to ram them with their cars during an arrest raid in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the Israeli army and police and Palestinian medical sources said. Since Oct 1, Israeli forces have killed 112 Palestinians. One US citizen and 19 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks.

Gunmen kidnap 26 Qataris in Iraqi desert AFP, Baghdad About 100 gunmen kidnapped at least 26 Qataris from their hunting camp in a sprawling desert area near the Saudi borders in the early hours of yesterday, the regional governor and police officials said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the mass abduction. Islamic State militants often travel in large numbers in convoys.

Shaky ceasefire holds in Yemen AFP, Aden A fragile ceasefire between Yemeni pro-government forces and Iran-backed rebels appeared to hold yesterday despite breaches, as UN-sponsored peace talks entered a second day in Switzerland. In one positive sign, tribal and military sources said that loyalists and the rebels were expected to exchange hundreds of captured fighters yesterday following weeks of mediation.

Libya peace deal delayed again

REUTERS, Tripoli The signing of a long-delayed peace deal between Libya's warring factions has been pushed back again to today because of logistical problems, a UN spokesman said yesterday. Representatives from Libya's two rival factions were due to agree the U.N.-backed accord on Wednesday after months of wrangling and opposition from hardliners in both camps. The pact called for a unity government to bring together two rival administrations and parliaments that have emerged four years after revolt ousted Muammar Gaddafi. Libya has one internationally-recognized administration in the east and a self-declared one that took over the capital after fighting erupted last year. Each is backed by competing armed factions. The presidents of both rival parliaments met on Tuesday for the first time since the latest fighting started more than a year ago - a move they said was a sign of progress. But they both dismissed the UN deal as a foreign imposition. Some Western diplomats said the two parliament leaders are the main block to getting support and a vote on a UN deal and they could be the target of sanctions if an agreement is signed without them. Islamic State militants have gained a foothold inside Libya in the security chaos, controlling Sirte city, drawing more foreign fighters away from the group's main Middle East stronghold in Iraq and Syria.

Serious differences remain

SAYS RUSSIA AFTER KERRY'S MOSCOW VISIT; SYRIA PEACE TALKS TO GO AHEAD AGENCIES Serious differences remain between Russia and the United States over ways to resolve the Syria crisis, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said yesterday, a day after US Secretary of State John Kerry visited Moscow. After a three-hour meeting in Moscow between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kerry, the two sides appeared to be a step closer to each other's positions on Syria, though differences remained on the fate of President Bashar al-Assad. "We support the idea of convening in New York another meeting of the International Syria Support Group at the ministerial level this Friday, December 18," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after the talks, which also touched on counterterrorism and Ukraine. He and Kerry said the New York Council resolution to underpin the process aimed at brokering a ceasefire and political talks between Assad's regime and Syria's armed opposition. "We discussed today in great detail

DEVELOPMENTS US defence chief reviews anti-IS war in Baghdad Ankara, Moscow trade barbs over jet downing India to join IS fight if UN adopts resolution

the need to accelerate the effort," Washington's top diplomat said. "You can't defeat Daesh without also de-escalating the fight in Syria," he said, using another name to refer to the jihadist Islamic State group. Kerry and Lavrov admitted differences remained between Washington and Moscow on Assad's fate but stressed they would not let those ruin the political talks. Kerry hopes that if the regime and the rebels can agree a truce, then they, Russia and a US-led coalition of Western and Arab allies can focus their fire on the jihadists. In Iraq, US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter held talks with officials yesterday to review progress in the war against the

Islamic State group. Carter met Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi. US aircraft carry out daily air strikes against IS targets, most of them in the Iraqi part of the jihadists' self-proclaimed "caliphate", which also covers regions in Syria. Meanwhile, Turkey yesterday accused Russia of playing up a military threat from Ankara that does not exist, comments likely to further strain tensions between the two after the downing of a jet over Syria last month. Relations between Ankara and Moscow are at their worst in recent memory, with Russia imposing sanctions on Turkey. Yesterday, Moscow's deputy foreign minister said Turkey should pay compensation for shooting down the plane near the Syrian-Turkish border. Meanwhile, India said it can undertake operations against the Islamic State terror group under a UN flag if the global body adopts a resolution in this regard. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar also said that India has been sharing intelligence on IS and it will be enhanced.

UN: Norway best country to live INDEPENDENT.CO.UK Norway has been named the best country in the world to live in - for the 12th year in a row. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure of basic human developments within 188 countries, released by the UN in its annual report. Norway ranks at the top, followed by Australia and Switzerland, with values of 0.944, 0.935 and 0.930 respectively, making them the best countries to live in for health, life expectancy, education and high incomes. The five countries at the bottom of the list, in the low human development category, from 183rd to 188th are Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Central African

EU SUMMIT ON KEY REFORMS TO AVOID 'BREXIT' Germany ready to help 'natural ally' Britain

REUTERS, Berlin Germany signalled its readiness yesterday to be "extremely helpful" to Prime Minister David Cameron in his quest to renegotiate Britain's membership of the European Union. Speaking before EU leaders debate Cameron's EU reform demands today, Chancellor Angela Merkel called Britain a "natural ally" and described the benefits British membership brings to the bloc's 28 members. Cameron has promised to renegotiate Britain's EU ties ahead of a membership referendum by the end of 2017. While he favours staying in a reformed EU, he has said he rules out nothing if he does not get the changes he wants. She stressed Britain's contribution to strengthening Europe's internal market and promoting economic growth. "As a permanent member of the United

Nations Security Council, Great Britain contributes significantly to the European Union's importance in the world," she said. Reaching a deal on the British question would be "very challenging", Merkel added. But she said the EU had in the past addressed other countries' issues in the bloc "and I am therefore confident we can do it this time". She said the core EU principles of free movement of people and non-discrimination between citizens could not be questioned. "These principles are not up for negotiation," Merkel declared to loud applause in the Bundestag, stressing that the details of the talks would be critical. Limiting benefits available to EU migrants to Britain is the most contentious of Cameron's demands. A senior German official told a pre-summit briefing Berlin was ready to be "extremely helpful" to Cameron, but it was up to him to present his case.



Ensaf Haidar (L), the wife of jailed Saudi Arabian blogger Raif Badawi, poses with a portrait of her husband as she receives the 2015 Sakharov Prize on his behalf from European Parliament President Martin Schulz (R), during a ceremony at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, yesterday. Badawi was sentenced in 2014 to 10 years in jail, a fine and 1,000 lashes for insulting Islam, cyber crime and disobeying his father, which is a crime in Saudi Arabia.

Nepal passes bill on quake rebuilding

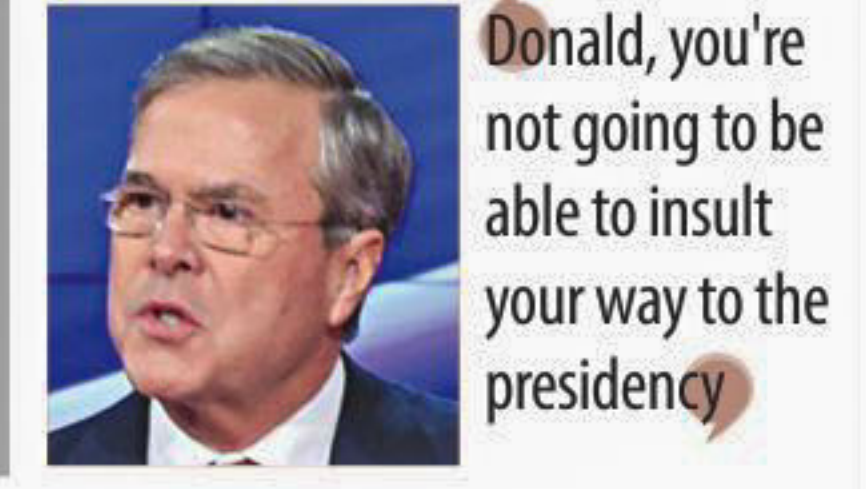
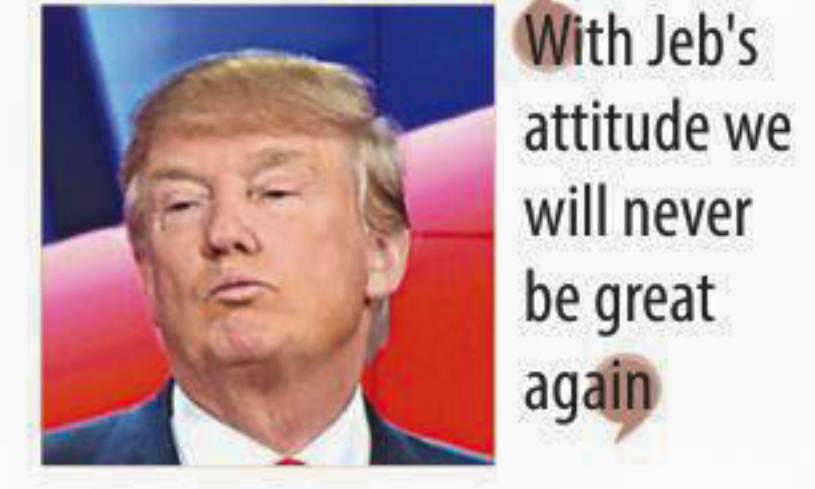
AFP, Kathmandu Nepal's parliament yesterday passed a long-delayed law to pave the way for rebuilding after April's massive earthquake, ending months of bickering that paralysed reconstruction despite donor pledges of billions in aid. "I announce that the bill related to reconstruction of earthquake-affected infrastructure... has been passed unanimously," Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar said in parliament. The government vowed in June to set up a National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to oversee rebuilding and ensure that all aid went to victims, as part of its bid to attract funding from sceptical foreign donors. But political wrangling between the ruling CPN-UML party and the opposition Nepali Congress over the leadership of the new body prevented the bill conferring legal status on the NRA from being passed. The final vote paving the way for the NRA, which will process all aid funds, followed weeks of closed-door negotiations. A spokesman for the ruling party told AFP the government would work fast to set up the new state body to avoid further delays in rebuilding. The 7.8-magnitude quake killed almost 8,900 people and destroyed more than half a million homes. Thousands of victims still live in tents eight months later due to the government's failure to spend a \$4.1 billion reconstruction fund. Quake victims have so far received just \$150 in compensation per household, while the government has promised an

DEBATE OF REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS Jeb Bush takes on Donald Trump

REUTERS, Las Vegas Republican front-runner Donald Trump sharply clashed with challenger Jeb Bush in a national security debate on Tuesday but escaped any severe criticism from his other rivals, who were reluctant to take on the contentious billionaire. Bush, who has lagged in opinion polls, assailed Trump for a lack of depth and seriousness and called him a "chaos candidate" who was adept at one-liners but naive on policy issues. He said Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering the United States was not a serious plan. The other contenders, including US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, avoided criticism of Trump and focused their attacks on President Barack Obama and Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton, Obama's former secretary of state, accusing them of failing to keep the United States safe. "Donald is great at the one-liners, but he is a chaos candidate and he would be a former president," said Bush, 62, the former governor of Florida, who called

Trump's proposal to kill the families of Islamic State militants "just crazy." "Donald, you're not going to be able to insult your way to the presidency," Bush said. "Leadership is not about attacking people and disparaging people." Trump, 69, dismissed Bush's criticism. "With Jeb's attitude we will

never be great again," Trump said, and defended his Muslim proposal. "We're not talking about isolation; we're talking about security. We're not talking about religion; we're talking about security. Our country is out of control," Trump said. When Trump complained that the CNN moderators were trying to entice candidates into attacking him, Bush



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Donald, you're not going to be able to insult your way to the presidency. Meanwhile, Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai condemned Trump's views on Muslims on Tuesday, at a sombre ceremony to remember the 134 children killed in a Taliban attack on a Pakistani school a year ago. "Well, that's really tragic that you hear these comments which are full of hatred, full of this ideology of being discriminative towards others," Malala



UN kicks off race for next secy-general

AFP, United Nations The United Nations on Tuesday kicked off the race to be the next secretary-general with a letter that for the first time invited candidates to become the world's top diplomat. The choice of the UN chief has for decades been the purview of the five permanent Security Council members - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - in a selection process kept mostly behind closed doors. But a UN resolution adopted by the General Assembly in September lifted some of the secrecy surrounding the process, asking candidates to present their resumes and lay out their vision for the job. Officials said the first hearings of candidates will take place in late March and early April, allowing member-states to ask questions about their priorities. The UN's next secretary-general will take up the post on January 1, 2017, replacing Ban Ki-moon who held the job for two five-year terms. Speculation surrounding the next UN chief has focussed on whether the first woman will take up the job, after eight men in the job, and on picking a candidate from Eastern Europe. Among the names being floated for the top job are two Bulgarians -- UNESCO chief Irina Bokova and EU budget commissioner Kristalina Georgieva -- along with Croatian Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic. Among non-Eastern Europeans, attention has focused on former New Zealand PM Helen Clark and Chilean President Michelle Bachelet.



Students hold placards during a candlelight vigil in Islamabad, Pakistan, yesterday, to mark the first anniversary of a Taliban attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. Pakistan's leader yesterday called for vengeance as the country marked the massacre that killed 151 people in its worst-ever extremist attack. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Nirbhaya' named

AFP, New Delhi The mother of a student who died after being gang-raped publicly named her daughter for the first time yesterday, in a bid to end the stigma facing sex attack victims in India. The 23-year-old student died after being brutally assaulted on a bus in New Delhi in 2012, triggering global outrage. Rape victims are normally shunned and vilified in deeply patriarchal India and they cannot be named under national law in a bid to protect them. "I feel no shame in naming my daughter. I say this in front of you all that her name was Jyoti Singh," Asha Singh said at a public gathering in Delhi to mark the third anniversary of the attack. "You all must also from now onwards call her Jyoti Singh."

NATIONAL HERALD CASE Sonia, Rahul unlikely to seek bail: sources

NDTV ONLINE Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul are likely to choose to go to jail rather than seek bail in the National Herald case, top Congress sources have told NDTV. The two top Congress leaders are among seven people summoned by a trial court for a hearing in the case on Saturday. Top sources in the Congress said that the Gandhis "are not inclined to seek bail and are ready to go to jail if required." Their legal defence in the case will be a close-guarded secret till the appearance in court, they said. The Congress is also preparing to stage a show of strength in the capital on that day, sources said. It has summoned its chief ministers and other state leaders for a meeting at the party headquarters, 24 Akbar Road, in New Delhi and all its lawmakers from both Houses of Parliament have also been asked to be present. They are likely to stage a march. The case, filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, accuses the Gandhis and four others of forming a company with the intention of acquiring property belonging to the now defunct newspaper National Herald that was founded by Jawaharlal Nehru. The seventh entity summoned in the case is Young Indian, the company formed by them, in which the Gandhis own 76 per cent shares. Both Sonia Gandhi and her son have aggressively countered the allegations against them as political vendetta. The BJP on its part has maintained that the party or the government it runs has nothing to do with the case.