Musharraf cleared over Pak rebel killing

AFP, Quetta

A Pakistani court yesterday acquitted former military ruler Pervez Musharraf over the 2006 killing of a Baloch rebel leader, one of three legal cases he faced after returning from exile, lawyers said. The decision was the first significant ruling in the cases since Musharraf was indicted in 2015 for the

North Korea scattered propaganda leaflets

killing of nationalist leader

Nawab Akbar Bugti.

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has scattered nearly one million propaganda leaflets in South Korea over the past week, Seoul said yesterday, in an escalating propaganda battle triggered by Pyongyang's latest nuclear test. The leaflets, floated across the border by helium balloons, are an apparent response to South Korea's decision to blast a mix of K-pop and propaganda messages into North Korea using giant banks of speakers.

Four dead in suicide attack at Cameroon AFP, Yaoundé

Four worshippers were killed in a suicide bombing at a mosque in northern Cameroon yesterday, a security source said, five days after a similar attack left 12 people dead. Yesterday's blast hit the village of Nguetchewe in Cameroon's Far North region, in an area near the border with Nigeria regularly targeted by Boko Haram jihadists.

Tanzania bans newspaper for 'incitement'

AFP, Dar Es Salaam

Tanzania has banned a weekly newspaper for inciting violence, including stories on scrapped elections in Zanzibar, the information minister said yesterday. The weekly Swahililanguage Mawio newspaper "is banned permanently" Minister of Information Nape Nnauye said in a statement, with the shutdown applying to both the print and online editions.

Man tried in Germany for helping Tamil Tigers

AFP, Hamburg

A Sri Lankan-born man went on trial in Germany yesterday charged with membership of the rebel group the Tamil Tigers which Germany considers a terrorist organisation. The 53-year-old German national, identified only as Yogendran G by the court, is accused of having raised funds from 2007-2009 for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The accused, who said he had been a German citizen since 2007, did not speak in his defence on the opening day of the trial, which was scheduled to run until March 7.

NEWSIN Won't rest till ex-FBI man release brief Says Obama; Three American prisoners arrive in Germany

Says Obama; Three American prisoners arrive in Germany

AFP, Washington

While five American citizens were freed from detention in Iran this weekend, the US government vowed later Sunday to work tirelessly for the release of another missing for nine years.

Ex-FBI agent Robert Alan Bob Levinson disappeared in mysterious circumstances in March 2007 during a visit to the Iranian island of Kish. He was reportedly investigating cigarette counterfeiting in the region. Levinson, 67, is considered to be the

longest-held hostage in US history, if still alive. "Even as we rejoice in the safe return

of others, we will never forget about Bob," President Barack Obama said in a White House speech. "Each and every day, but especially

today, our hearts are with the Levinson

family, and we will not rest until their family is whole again." Of the US citizens who have been freed by Iran, four were part of a prisoner swap with America, while a fifth was released in a separate process,

according to US officials. Taking to Twitter, Secretary of State John Kerry said "For over a year, we

have raised the cases of American citizens unjustly detained in #Iran at every opportunity."

He added: "Iran also agreed to deepen our coordination as we work to locate Robert Levinson. We won't rest until the Levinson family is whole again."

Meanwhile, three of the four US citizens freed by Iran in a prisoner

IRAN PRISONER SWAP



rejoice in the safe return of others, we will never forget about Bob"

Even as we

swap arrived in Germany on Sunday, Secretary of State John Kerry said, where they were expected at an American military base. The released prisoners, all of whom have dual US-Iranian citizenship, landed in Germany after a brief stopover in Geneva. They included The Washington

Post's Tehran correspondent Jason Rezaian, who had been detained in Iran for nearly 18 months, Christian pastor Saeed Abedini and former US Marine Amir Hekmati.

"Today, Jason Rezaian, ... Saeed Abedini, and Amir Hekmati arrived in Germany, and soon they will be reunited with their families," Kerry tweeted.

Kerry also confirmed the release of the fourth Iranian-American freed in the prisoner swap, Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari, and American Matthew Trevithick, who was released in a separate process.

"Today, all Americans celebrate the freedom of our fellow citizens," he tweeted. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has announced a \$5 million reward for information leading to Levinson's return. "The FBI expects our Iranian coun-

terparts to fulfill their commitment to locate Bob and help bring him home safely," the agency said in a statement.

"Bob forever remains part of the FBI family, and we remain committed to bringing him home safely to the family who misses him so much."

The FBI said "we continue to investigate and follow up on all information we receive, no matter how insignificant it might seem."

Iran deal may not herald rapid changes

AP, Dubai

The lifting of crippling international sanctions linked to Iran's nuclear program and the flurry of diplomacy that led to the release of Americans held by Tehran suggests a new era could be dawning. But anyone hoping for rapid change is likely to be disappointed. President Hassan Rouhani and his team

have plenty to celebrate now **ANALYSIS** that nuclear sanctions have

been removed. The moderate leader promised to boost Iran's struggling economy and improve its relations with the wider world during his 2013 campaign. The nuclear deal achieves both aims.

It will take time for the economic benefits to trickle down to ordinary Iranians, but the goodwill from the deal could translate into electoral gains for moderate and reformist candidates in parliamentary elections late next month. For all the conversations US Secretary of State John Kerry and Zarif have had over the past few years, the fact remains that they represent countries that do not have formal diplomatic relations. Still, the two diplomats have forged a working relationship that can at times bear fruit.

Months of negotiations resulted in the release of four Iranian-Americans from prison, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian, in exchange for seven Iranians held in the US, six of them also dual nationals. And rapid-fire diplomacy managed to get 10 US Navy sailors and their boats released from Iranian custody in less

than 24 hours last week - an unthinkably quick turnaround compared to past cases where foreigners found themselves in Iranian

territory. But there are limits. Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi, who is believed to be detained in

Iran, was not part of this weekend's prisoner swap. Also still missing is former FBI agent Robert Levinson. Iran meanwhile remains a staunch

backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad, putting it at odds with the US and Sunni Arab powers including Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, a US-supported, Saudi-led coalition is fighting to roll back gains by Iranian-backed Shia rebels. And mistrust runs deep on both sides.



Policemen search for survivors under a collapsed roof of the police headquarters after a Saudi-led air strike destroyed it in Yemen's capital Sanaa yesterday. At least 30 people have been killed and wounded in the strike, a source in the emergency services said. PHOTO: REUTERS

Maldives 'backtracks' on Nasheed travel

AGENCIES

The Maldives government has backtracked on a promise to allow jailed ex-leader Mohamed Nasheed to travel to the UK for surgery, his lawyer and party said yesterday. Nasheed was due to leave for the UK for back surgery on

Sunday after the government agreed to his request. But it has now insisted that he nominate a family member to stay in the capital, Male, to guarantee his return, said lawyer Hassan Latheef.

The government said this was standard for convicts travelling abroad. Nasheed was given a

13-year sentence under anti-terror laws last year - following a trial which his lawyers said was biased and intended to end his political career. The government had only agreed to

the travel on Saturday following international pressure, saying he must return to the Maldives to serve the remainder of

the sentence. The former leader has since cancelled his travel

Latheef told Reuters: "The government reneged on the agreed deal at the last minute, demanding a close family member of Nasheed remain in Male, effectively as a hostage, until he returns from the UK." "If Nasheed does anything that breach[es] the terms

of the government, the family member could then be criminally prosecuted. This kind of blackmail is illegal, unheard of in international affairs, and totally outrageous."

Clinton, Sanders clash on gun control

BBC ONLINE

Candidates for the Democratic race for the White House have clashed on gun control and healthcare in their liveliest TV debate so far.

Hillary Clinton attacked Bernie Sanders' record on gun control, and said his healthcare plan risked derailing recent

legislation. Sanders **US DEMOCRATIC DEBATE** accused Clinton of being in the pocket of financial institutions responsible for the 2008 crisis. While Clinton leads

nationwide, Sanders is a threat in key states. Hours before the debate in South Carolina, Sanders - a Vermont senator - had unveiled a healthcare plan for

all American citizens. This was the final Democratic debate before caucuses in Iowa on 1 February show who the

state's voters prefer as their candidate. Former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, who is trailing Clinton and

Sanders in polls, also took part in the lively

and far between.

Sanders announced his universal healthcare plan two hours before the debate started on late Sunday.

debate in which personal attacks were few

Clinton said any moves to scrap the current Affordable Healthcare Act risked plunging the Democrats into "contentious debate". Instead, the party should work on improving the

> programme, known as Obamacare. Sanders responded:

"Nobody is tearing this up." He said he wanted to build on Obamacare. Gun control was the

first subject in the twohour debate, that was held near a church in Charleston where nine parishioners were

shot dead in June 2015. Clinton released an advertisement this week attacking Sanders for his attitude towards gun control. His home state, Vermont, has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the US, with close to one in two households owning a weapon.

US, Iraq search for abducted Israeli woman stabbed Americans

AFP, Baghdad

US and Iraqi authorities were searching yesterday for three Americans who were kidnapped in Baghdad, the latest group of foreign nationals abducted in recent months.

Kidnappers have recently seized Qataris and Turks, but it has been years since Americans were abducted, and Iraqis have suffered the most from kidnappers seeking ransoms or to settle scores.

The Islamic State group, which overran large areas in 2014, has abducted thousands of people and carried out a slew of executions, while Shia paramilitary forces opposed to the jihadists have also carried ou kidnappings and killings.

Iraqi parliament speaker Salim al-Juburi condemned the rise in "cases of foreigners being kidnapped in Iraq.'

in West Bank home

Aide to Palestinian negotiator arrested for 'spying'

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli forces yesterday hunted for a Palestinian suspect accused of breaking into a West Bank home and stabbing a Jewish woman to death, further boosting tensions after months of violence.

under way, another stabbing occurred on a street in a separate West Bank settlement, wounding a 30-year-old pregnant woman identified as Michal Froman. The 17-year-old

As the hunt was

Palestinian assailant was shot by security

personnel and taken to hospital in severe condition after the attack in Tekoa south of Jerusalem.

While Sunday's killing was part of a months-long wave of violence, it was the

first inside a Jewish settlement home in the

occupied West Bank and triggered fears that

the unrest was worsening and that Israel would impose a harsh security crackdown on Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signalled further security measures yesterday, pledging to "strengthen the communities" after the deadly stabbing

in the Otniel settle-ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT ment near the flashpoint city of Hebron in the south-

> ern West Bank. Meanwhile, Palestinian intelligence officers have arrested an employee of top negotiator and PLO secretary-

general Saeb Erekat on accusations of "spying for Israel", a

security source said on Sunday. The high-ranking official said on condition of anonymity that the man employed in the negotiations department of the Palestine Liberation Organisation was

Muslim women must learn Will fulfil desires Trump ban risks making English or be deported

Says British PM David Cameron

AFP, London

Islamic State.

Muslim women who fail to learn English to a high enough standard could face deportation from Britain, Prime Minister David Cameron announced yesterday.

He also suggested that poor English skills can leave people "more susceptible" to the messages of groups like

Cameron's comments came as his centre-right Conservatives launched a £20 million (\$28.5 million, 26 million euro) language fund for women in isolated communities as part of a drive to

build community integration. Immigration rules already force spouses to speak English before they come to Britain to live with their partners. But Cameron said

their language skills were improving.

they would also face further tests after two

and a half years in the country to make sure

"You can't guarantee you will be able to stay if you are not improving your language, he told BBC radio. "People coming to our country, they have responsibilities too."

around 190,000 Muslim women in England no English.

> of some 53 million. Cameron said that a lack of

> Muslims in Britain more vulnerable to the message of extremist groups.

causal connection between not speaking English and becoming an extremist, of course not," he told BBC radio.

Cameron's government estimates that

around 2.7 million Muslims in England out of a total population

language skills could make

"I am not saying there is some sort of

His comments drew criticism from meeting of tribal communities in Kokrajhar and a youth rally in Khanapara, Guwahati, " he wrote in another tweet. Muslim groups and opposition parties.

ANI, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said that he was eagerly awaiting his two-day visit to the northeast and added his government is leaving no stone unturned to fulfil the development aspirations of the region. "I am eagerly awaiting my 2-day visit to the Northeast.

Will participate in various programmes in Sikkim & Assam and interact with citizens. A conference of State Agriculture -- about 22 percent -- speak little or | Ministers is being held in Gangtok. Am particularly delighted that the conference is being held in Sikkim," he There are estimated to be wrote in a series of tweets. He added that the conference of agriculture ministers would focus on sustainable development, organic farming and ecotourism. "In Gangtok I will also visit an exhibition of organic

products and interact with organic farmers. I envision the Northeast to be a hub in this," he added. The Prime Minister will also interact with the youth of Assam, students of IIT, NIT and central universities of the

northeast on the second day of his visit. "Tomorrow I will be in Assam where I will interact with the youth of Assam, students of IIT, NIT & central universities of the Northeast. Tomorrow I will address a public

of Northeast: Modi tycoon a 'martyr' **BBC ONLINE**

Stopping Donald Trump from coming to the UK risks turning him into a martyr, a Labour MP has claimed as the House of Commons debates the issue. Paul Flynn said Mr Trump's call to ban

Muslims from the US was "extremely dangerous" but barring him from the UK risked being seen as anti-American. However, SNP MP Tasmina Ahmed-

Sheikh said a ban would be justified on the grounds of "religious harmony". MPs are debating a pro-ban petition,

which has attracted 574,000 signatures. The tycoon, who is leading several opinion polls in the race to be the Republican candidate for president, called for a temporary ban on all Muslims entering the US in response to the shooting of 14 people in San

Bernardino, California in December. Trump's comments were criticised across the political spectrum in the US and Europe. He caused further anger by claiming that

become no-go areas for the police. Backing a ban, Labour MP Tulip Siddiq

arrested around two weeks ago.

said that Mr Trump's words "risks inflaming tensions between vulnerable communities" and those calling for this "poisonous and corrosive" man to be barred were speaking in "good conscience".

"I draw the line with freedom of speech when it actually imports violent ideology which is what I feel is happening," she said. "The legislation exists to protect the public

and the people of Britain from individuals such as this. If other people have been stopped from coming into the country the same rules need to apply to Donald Trump." Tory MP Andrew Murrison said to ban

Trump who had a chance of becoming US president could be construed as an "almighty snub" to the USA.

Fellow Conservative Sir Edward Leigh said the UK had invited despots to the UK in the past who had done "far, far worse than anything Donald Trump can dream of" areas of London and other parts of the UK warning against "shutting down an honest have become so radicalised that they have debate about immigration".