

# NEWSIN brief

## 5 killed in Myanmar military plane crash

AFP, Naypyidaw  
All five crew died when a Myanmar air force plane crashed in the capital Naypyidaw yesterday, bursting into flames soon after take off and smashing into a nearby field, the military said. The Beechcraft passenger plane took off from the Naypyidaw airfield in the mid-morning on a routine patrol, but burst into flames soon after leaving the runway, according to an airport official.



This photo released yesterday shows a migrant standing on top of a capsized boat as he waits to be rescued by members of the Turkish Coast Guard in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Edremit, northwestern Turkey, on Monday. Twenty-seven migrants, 11 of them children, drowned in that tragedy. The EU piled more pressure on Greece yesterday, telling Athens to improve conditions for refugees so that other overstretched member states can send migrants back there.

PHOTO: AFP

## French FM bows out

AFP, Paris  
France's veteran Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius bowed out of government yesterday after a three-decade career. Fabius holds the distinction of being France's youngest ever prime minister, a post he took up at 37. As foreign minister, Fabius helped to negotiate a complex climate deal, the Iran nuclear deal, as well as dealing with the thorny dossiers of the Syria conflict. He is expected to take up a position as head of France's Constitutional Court.

## Suicide attacks kill 6 in Cameroon

AFP, Yaoundé  
At least six civilians were killed and over 30 injured yesterday in a double suicide attack in Cameroon's northern border region with Nigeria, which is regularly attacked by Boko Haram fighters, security sources said. The attackers, who were also killed, were both female, said a source.

## Young Palestinian killed by Israeli fire

AFP, Jerusalem  
Israeli fire killed a Palestinian youth during clashes near Hebron in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry said. A wave of violence that erupted in October has claimed the lives of 166 Palestinians, 26 Israelis, a US national, an Eritrean and a Sudanese.

## China confirms first imported Zika case

AFP, Beijing  
China confirmed its first imported case of Zika late Tuesday, Xinhua reported, as fears mount over the fast-spreading virus that has been linked to severe birth defects mostly in Latin America. Few cases of the mosquito-borne illness have been reported in Asia, but the World Health Organization has declared a global health emergency to combat Zika as cases spread elsewhere.

# No 'bullying' in S China Sea: US

Washington, Delhi mull joint naval drill

REUTERS, Washington  
US President Barack Obama will deliver a tough message to China during a summit with Southeast Asian countries next week that disputes in the South China Sea must be resolved peacefully and not with a big nation "bullying" smaller neighbours, the White House said on Tuesday.

Obama will also address North Korea's "provocations," a nuclear test last month and a rocket launch over the weekend, when he hosts the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in California on Monday and Tuesday, aides said.

"The president will call on all claimants to halt land reclamation, construction of new facilities and to carry out no militarization of outposts in the South China Sea," Dan Kritenbrink, Obama's top Asia adviser, told reporters on a conference call previewing the Asean talks.

Meanwhile, the US and India have held talks about conducting joint naval patrols that a US defence official said could include the disputed South China Sea, a move that would likely anger Beijing.

The official said the two sides had discussed joint patrols, adding that both were hopeful of launching them within the year. The patrols would likely be in the Indian Ocean where the Indian navy is a major player as well as the South China Sea.

Washington wants its regional allies and other Asian nations to take a more united stance against China over the South China Sea, where tensions have spiked in the wake of Beijing's construction of seven man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago.

# South Korea shuts joint industrial park with North

Japan imposes sanctions after satellite launch

AGENCIES  
South Korea yesterday suspended operations at a jointly run factory park just inside North Korea following the North's long-range rocket launch over the weekend, cutting off an important source of revenue for the impoverished North.

Seoul said all operations at the complex would halt, to stop the North using its investment "to fund its nuclear and missile development".

Kaesong is one of the last points of co-operation between the two Koreas and a key source of revenue for Pyongyang.

It came as Japan imposed new sanctions against the North following the launch. They include a ban on North Korean vessels coming into port in Japan and on vessels from other countries that have visited the state.

The US warned on Tuesday that the North could soon have enough plutonium for nuclear weapons.

South Korea, the US, Japan and others see Sunday's rocket launch - ostensibly to put a satellite into space - as cover for a banned test of missile technology.

Tensions have risen over the past month since North Korea carried out a fourth nuclear test in early January.

## ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF EXECUTED

The announcement came amid reports that the North's military chief, Ri Yong-gil, had been executed on corruption charges.

South Korea's state news agency Yonhap quoted unnamed sources saying the general, who was appointed in 2013, had been deemed guilty of corruption and pursuing personal gains.

There was no confirmation of the report. South Korea's National Intelligence Service declined to comment and it was not

possible to independently verify the report.

A rare official confirmation of a high-profile execution came after Jang Song Thaek, leader Kim Jong Un's uncle and the man who was once considered the second most powerful figure in the country, was executed for corruption in 2013.

In May last year, the North executed its defence chief by anti-aircraft gun at a firing range, the South's spy agency said in a report to members of parliament.



Kim Jong-Un with Ri Yong-gil

# IS militants determined to strike US this year

Intelligence officials tell Washington lawmakers

AP, Washington  
Leaders of the Islamic State are determined to strike targets in the United States this year, senior US intelligence officials said Tuesday, telling lawmakers that a small group of violent extremists will attempt to overcome the logistical challenges of mounting such an attack.

In testimony before congressional committees, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and other officials described the Islamic State as the "pre-eminent terrorist threat." The militant group can "direct and inspire attacks against a wide range of targets around the world," Clapper said.

Marine Lt Gen Vincent Stewart, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said the Islamic State will probably conduct additional attacks in Europe and then attempt the same in the US. He said US intelligence

agencies believe IS leaders will be "increasingly involved in directing attacks rather than just encouraging lone attackers."

Clapper also said al-Qaeda, from which the Islamic State spun off, remains an enemy and the US will continue to see cyber threats from China, Russia and North Korea, which also is ramping up its nuclear program.

North Korea has expanded a uranium enrichment facility and restarted a plutonium reactor that could begin recovering material for nuclear weapons in weeks or months, Clapper said in delivering the annual assessment by intelligence agencies of the top dangers facing the country.

On the cyber threat, Clapper said US information systems, controlled by the US government and American industry, are vulnerable to cyberattacks from Russia and China.



James Clapper



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the construction site of a new military border fence between Israel and Jordan, on Tuesday. Netanyahu has vowed to build the 15ft fence to surround the whole of Israel, saying that the country must "protect itself from wild beasts". The Israeli PM appeared to use the extraordinary phrase - which has also been translated as "predators" - to describe both Palestinians and the people of neighbouring Arab states.

PHOTO: AFP

## Mumbai or Bombay?

AFP, London  
British newspaper The Independent will switch back to using Bombay rather than Mumbai when referring to India's financial capital, its editor said yesterday. Amol Rajan said the move was a stand against what he said was the closed-minded view of Hindu nationalists. Shiv Sena renamed the western Indian city in 1995 after the goddess Mumbadevi, the protector of fisherman who were the area's original inhabitants. Marathi speakers had always called the city "Mumbai", whereas "Bombay" was an anglicised take on the Portuguese colonial name "Bom Bahia", or "good bay".

# 'Yes, it is the end of Europe'

Trump raps Merkel over migrants, says US could have good ties with Putin

REUTERS, Paris  
US Republican presidential contender Donald Trump said German Chancellor Angela Merkel was wrong to let in thousands of migrants into Germany and that the refugee crisis could trigger revolutions and even the end of Europe.

"I think Angela Merkel made a tragic mistake with the migrants," Trump told French conservative weekly Valeurs Actuelles, which said it was the billionaire's first in-depth campaign interview with European media.

"If you don't treat the situation competently and firmly, yes, it's the end of Europe. You could face real revolutions," Trump was quoted as saying, according to the French translation.

The 69-year-old property magnate also said Brussels had become a breeding ground for terrorists and some neighbourhoods in Paris and elsewhere in France had become no-go zones. He also said tight French gun laws were partly responsible for the killing of dozens of people at the Bataclan concert hall last November by Islamist militants.

"I always have a gun with me. Had I been at the Bataclan, I can tell you I would have opened fire," he said.

Trump further said he thought the United States could have very good relations with Russia's Vladimir Putin. "He (Putin) said I was brilliant. That proves a certain smartness," said Trump.

## EU MIGRANT CRISIS Thai cops bust fake passport making gang

AFP, Bangkok  
Thai police have broken up a major fake passport ring led by an Iranian known as "The Doctor" which sent hundreds of passports to Middle Eastern customers trying to enter Europe, authorities said yesterday.

The kingdom has long been a hub for a forged document industry serving human traffickers and other criminals. Five years of investigation culminated in Monday's arrest of the alleged Iranian mastermind Hamid Reza Jafari who had learnt his skill from his late father, police said.

The 48-year-old had for many years been crafting sophisticated forgeries from his home in Chachoengsao province east of Bangkok, they said.

Five Pakistani middlemen were also arrested in the raids.

# Obama unveils cyber-security action plan

US SC calls halt to climate initiative

AFP, Washington  
US President Barack Obama unveiled a cybersecurity "national action plan" on Tuesday as his intelligence chief warned of growing risks from new technologies that open more doors to hackers.

"More and more, keeping America safe is not just about more tanks or more airplanes," Obama told reporters at the White House.

"We also have to bolster our security online. As we've seen in the past few years, and just in the past few days, cyber threats pose a danger not only to our national security but our economic security."

US intelligence chief James Clapper underscored those risks at a Senate hearing, pointing out that wider adoption of connected devices and new systems that rely on artificial intelligence can open up doors to hackers.

Clapper named Russia, China, Iran and North Korea as "leading threat actors" which pose risks for US security, and said



## TERROR CHARGES French MPs back stripping of citizenship

REUTERS, Paris  
President Francois Hollande's plan to strip French citizenship from people convicted of terrorism passed a first hurdle on Tuesday when the lower house of parliament backed controversial proposals introduced after Islamic extremists killed 130 people in Paris last November.

The National Assembly voted by 162-148 late on Tuesday to write a passport-stripping clause into the Constitution, despite misgivings by some lawmakers that it was too extreme.

The vote appeared to only partially defuse concerns of a broad rebellion scuttling a proposal that some, notably members of the ruling Socialist Party, consider an ineffective, symbolic measure in France's battle against terrorism.