NEWS_{IN} brief

Indian forces kill 8 Maoist rebels

REUTERS, New Delhi

Security forces killed eight suspected Maoist militants, including five women, in a raid on a rebel training camp in central India yesterday, police said, breaking a sixmonth-long lull in violence linked to an insurgency that has raged for years.

Operating across a vast swath of eastern and central India, the guerrillas say they are fighting for the rights of peasants and landless.

Israeli troops kill Palestinian 'attacker'

REUTERS, Ramallah

Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank as troops fought to rescue two soldiers who the army said yesterday were attacked after straying into a refugee camp. Since October, Israeli security forces have killed at least 170 Palestinians.

UNSC to vote on N Korea sanctions

REUTERS, United Nations

The UN Security Council was to vote yesterday on a resolution that would dramatically expand existing UN sanctions on North Korea in response to its Jan 6 nuclear test, the US mission to the United Nations said on Monday. The vote is expected to come during a meeting that begins at 2000 GMT yesterday.

Irom Sharmila resumes fast HE HINDU ONLINE

Manipuri rights activist Irom Sharmila, who was acquitted by a court of the charge of attempt to suicide, resumed her 15-year-long indefinite fast yesterday demanding repeal of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act in the state. Sharmila had started her fast in 2002 demanding

the repeal of the Act which

she termed "draconian".

Nepal to extend Everest permits

BBC Online

The authorities in Nepal are to extend for free permits for foreigners prevented from climbing Mount Everest by last year's earthquakes. More than 800 foreign climbers had paid up to \$11,000 for permits. Climbers who missed out will be able to use the same permit for

2016 and 2017. Cheating in military exam? No way

AFP, New Delhi

India's army made candidates at a recruitment day in Bihar take a written exam in their underwear to prevent them from cheating, reports said yesterday, after a spate of exam scandals in the eastern state. Images in the Indian Express showed dozens of men sitting crosslegged in a field clad only in underpants, with many resting their test papers on their thighs, while a uniformed supervisor stood



City



'warehouse of souls'

Pictures of destruction of the Jungle camp in Calais (picture no 2 and 3) and teargassing of people protesting the razor-wire barrier on the Greek-Macedonian border (picture 1 and 4) on Monday have caused outrage around the world. Macedonian police fired tear gas and stun grenades at around 300 men, women and children when some attempted to force their way through a cordon and break down parts of the fence. An overnight downpour left stranded refugees shivering in the mud yesterday. Around 7,000 people are stranded in Greece currently, and experts fear the number could swell to 70,000 by next month as the so-called 'refugee trail' from Greece to Berlin is closed off. Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has said the mounting crisis is turning his country into a "warehouse of souls". Meanwhile, in Calais, demolition crews once again returned to the Jungle camp, the slum-like home of approximately 5,000 people, yesterday to raze parts of the sprawling settlement, including people's only possessions and comforts, to the ground. The United Nations said yesterday more than 131,000 migrants and refugees have reached Europe via the Mediterranean this year, more than the total number in the first five months of 2015.



Assad sees 'glimmer of hope' More than \$1b 'deposited'

"The terrorists have breached the

UN delays Syria peace talks to March 9; truce largely holding

REUTERS, Berlin/beirut

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad described the cessation of hostilities in force since Saturday as a "glimmer of hope" and accused the opposition of violating the agreement intended to halt nearly five years of fighting. The opposition has in turn accused the

Syrian government of breaching the fragile truce by repeatedly attacking its positions, which the government denies. International observers have

acknowledged violations of the agreement while stressing that the level of violence has decreased considerably. "We will play our part to make the

whole thing work," Assad was quoted as saying in an extract of an interview with Germany's ARD television network. The president said the Syrian army

had not reacted to truce violations in

order to give the agreement a chance.

deal from the first day. We as the Syrian Army are refraining from responding in order to give a chance to sustain the agreement. But in the end there are limits and it all depends on the other side," Assad said. He also said people in Syria were

suffering from a "humanitarian disaster".

The war has killed at least 250,000 people and forced millions to flee their homes. The United Nations hopes the cessation of hostilities will allow it to deliver aid to more than 150,000 people in besieged areas of Syria.

The cessation of hostilities agreement, drawn up by the United States and Russia, is also seen by the United Nations as an opportunity to revive peace talks, which collapsed before they had even started a month ago in Geneva.

UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura yesterday told Reuters the next round of Syria peace talks will begin on the afternoon of March 9. He had previously pencilled in March 7, but he said he had postponed the round for logistical reasons and to cement a cessation of hostilities.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Monday that while efforts were being made to track down alleged violations of the cessation of hostilities, there was currently no evidence to suggest they would destabilise the fragile peace.

The agreement does not include Islamic State and the Nusra Front, and Assad and his Russian backers have made clear they intend to keep attacking the jihadist groups.

Moscow, meanwhile, called for the Syrian border with Turkey to be closed. Russia's Lavrov said it was a channel being used to supply weapons to groups he described as terrorists, with some arms hidden in humanitarian aid deliveries.

in Najib's account: WSJ ment vehicle founded in 2009 -- have con-

1MDB SCANDAL

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

The office of Malaysia's scandal-plagued prime minister yesterday denounced a Wall Street Journal report which alleged that he accepted hundreds of millions of dollars that originated from a state firm he

established.

The Wall Street Journal report, citing investigators in foreign countries and other anonymous sources with knowledge of the money movements, also said the sums received by Najib Razak may have topped \$1 billion -- far more than previously thought.

The fund transfers to Najib -first revealed by the Journal last July -- and allegations of huge sums pilfered from the state company have rocked Malaysian politics, prompting calls for Najib's ousting.

Najib, 62, and the company -- 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), an invest-

sistently denied wrongdoing but critics have accused both of failing to provide convincing proof.

Najib's office released a statement saying the newspaper had become a "willing vehi-

cle" for those plotting to oust him. It did not specify who was behind the alleged plot, but former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has led calls for Najib to be removed.

"They (the newspaper) keep repeating the same old allegations without providing evidence; they keep relying solely on anonymous sources that might not even exist;

and they keep choosing to omit key known facts," the statement said.

The statement did not directly refute the key allegations in the story.

It also repeated a Malaysian government claim that the money Najib received was a gift from the Saudi government.

Myanmar brings torward presidential vote date

BBC ONLINE

The vote to appoint a new president in Myanmar has been brought forward by a week, to 10 March.

negotiations on whether the constitution could be amended so Aung San Suu Kyi could take the top job. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a general

The move likely means an end to

election landslide victory in November and will take office at the end of March. But she is barred by the constitution from being the president.

Clause 59F, widely seen as having been included to target her, means anyone who has foreign children cannot take the post.

She has consistently said she will effectively lead the country anyway.

The original date for the nominations had been 17 March, which was seen as giving time for the NLD to negotiate with the military.

The new president will be elected by the upper and lower house from a list of three candidates put forward by MPs.

The NLD dominates both houses after taking 80% of contested seats in the election. But the military, which ran Myanmar for decades, still has an automatic 25% of all seats.

Analysts say Suu Kyi may actually be stronger outside the presidency. Little was said officially, but it was suggested that the army might trade suspending Clause 59F for more power.

That was rumoured to include the positions of chief minister in sensitive states like Rakhine and Kachin and almost certainly included promises that the military's political clout and financial muscle be left untouched.

It would have been a fudge and Ms Suu Kyi would have been accused of putting personal ambition over principle.

from Osama bin Laden

RACE TO WHITE HOUSE

Democrats: Total delegates: 4763 (A contestant needs 2383 delegates to win)



Clinton so far 546



Clinton and Sanders will compete for 865 delegates, 36% of the total number of party delegates on Super Tuesday.

Republicans: Total delegates: 2472









Rubio 16





595 Republican delegates - or 25% of the total number of party delegates - are up for grabs in Super Tuesday.

Carson 4

Why Super Tuesday is so important?

Super Tuesday is the name given to the day when the largest number of US states are given the chance to cast votes for Republican and Democratic candidates bidding for their party's ticket in the November US presidential election. It is usually seen as a turning point in most presidential campaigns, and a key indicator as to who the nominees will be from each party. Twelve states cast votes for candidates from either the Republican or Democratic parties or both in a contest seen as make-or-break for the hopefuls. Super Tuesday is an opportunity for frontrunners in this case, Trump and Clinton — to shore up their leads and pull away from the competition by winning a slew of states and solidifying their dominance. It has been widely predicted the GOP - Grand Old Party - field will narrow after Super Tuesday and either Kasich or Carson, or possibly both, will have to withdraw from the race. On the Democratic side, Sanders - once thought of as a protest candidate to advance the issue of income inequity - is likely to revert to that status and stay in the race even if Clinton wins big. SOURCE: AGENCIES



'Donald will change tone if elected'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Melania Trump has said her husband will change his tone if he is elected president of the United States.

Her comments came during a CNN interview with Anderson Cooper in which the host brought up the frequent insults fired between the Republican presidential candidates and the criticism Donald Trump has received for his tone on the campaign trail.

The 69-year-old New York businessman has made headlines for some of the language and insults he has used during debates and rallies.

But Trump, 45, insisted he would use a different tone if he was elected to the White House.

"He really can have a different tone, because to build the empire and the business that he built, you cannot always use that kind of a tone. I know him, and he could really change the

words and the tone." She added that supporters agreed with her husband because they were "tired of Washington and politicians in Washington [who] don't do much".

Mrs Trump said she did not agree with everything her husband said but added that she did not try to change him. "He's an adult. He knows the consequences and so I let him be who he is. I give him my opinions, many, many times."

FBI can't make Apple Nawaz Sharif took money provide iPhone data

Rules New York Judge

AP, Washington

A New York jurist has scolded the government in a stinging rebuke of arguments it has used to shame Apple for refusing to surrender information from its customers' iPhones, saying it's

stretching a 1789 law to get "impermissibly absurd results." The ruling Monday by US Magistrate Judge James Orenstein in Brooklyn came a day before a congressional hearing that will include testimony from FBI Director James Comey and Apple General Counsel Bruce Sewell on encryp-

tion and "balancing Americans' security and privacy." Orenstein, ruling in a Brooklyn drug case, noted his decision was not controlling in over a dozen cases nationwide facing the same legal question but "can nevertheless have some precedential value."

against a California judge's order that it create specialised software to help the FBI hack into an iPhone linked to the investigation of the Dec 2 San Bernardino, California, attack. Orenstein belittled some government arguments in both

cases, saying it was stretching an old law "to produce

impermissibly absurd results."

He seemed to be aiming in particular at Apple's fight

PTI, Islamabad Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif received money from al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden to contest elections against

claimed. The book titled 'Khalid Khawaja: Shaheed-i-Aman' by Shamama Khalid, the wife of former ISI operative Khalid Khawaja, claims that Sharif's pledge of introducing an Islamic system attracted

in 1990, a new book has

Khawaja as well as Osama. "Chief of PML-N Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif received funding from Osama bin Laden, founder of al-Qaeda, to contest elections against Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) after the end of Zia regime," the book states.

But even though Osama funded Sharif heavily, the latter backtracked from all his promises after coming into power, the Dawn reported yesterday.

OSAMA LEFT \$29M FOR JIHAD

Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party Meanwhile according to a will, Osama left a personal fortune of around \$29m after his death in a raid in 2011.

> The will is among a trove of documents released to US media on Tuesday. It was seized in the US assault in Abbotabad, Pakistan.

He urged his family to "obey my will" and to spend his inheritance on "jihad, for the sake of Allah".

In another letter, he urged his father to take care of his wife and children in the event of his death. That message made it clear that the risk of being killed was present in his mind.

US elite force to target top IS leaders in Iraq

The United States has deployed its elite counter-terrorism unit Delta Force for covert operations in Iraq to capture or kill high-ranking Islamic State operatives and gather intelli-

Army's elite Delta Force operations to target, capture or kill top IS operatives have begun in Iraq, after several weeks of covert preparation, an official with direct knowledge of the force's activities was quoted as saying by CNN.

informant networks and coordinating operations with Iraqi and Peshmerga units. Meanwhile, four IS suicide bombers infiltrated an army headquarters west of Baghdad, killing an Iraqi general and

The bombers attacked a regimental headquarters in the Haditha area of Anbar province late on Monday, killing Staff Brigadier General Ali Aboud, Lieutenant Colonel Farhan Ibrahim and four others, the sources said.

Meanwhile, the US-led coalition conducted 27 strikes against IS in Iraq and Syria on Monday in its latest round of daily attacks.

gence, according to a media report.

The official said the group has spent the last several weeks preparing, including setting up safe houses, establishing

five other soldiers, army and police officers said yesterday.