

NEWSIN brief

Turkey court reigns in anti-Erdogan daily

AFP, Istanbul
An Istanbul court yesterday ordered into administration a Turkish daily newspaper that is sharply critical of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, amid growing alarm over freedom of expression in the country. The Zaman newspaper was ordered into administration by the court on the request of Istanbul prosecutors. The move means the court will appoint new managers to run the newspaper, who will be expected to transform its editorial line, analysts say.

Pak man jailed for 13 years for FB post

AFP, Lahore
A Shia Pakistani man was sentenced to 13 years in prison Thursday for allegedly posting religiously offensive material on his Facebook page, lawyers in the case said. Rizwan Haider, 25, was convicted in an anti-terrorism court of three charges including promoting sectarian hatred, after he supposedly published a post referring to Prophet Mohammad.

Rupert Murdoch marries Jerry Hall

AFP, London
Media mogul Rupert Murdoch, 84, married model Jerry Hall in London yesterday after the couple announced their engagement in January, a spokesman for the family confirmed. The couple tied the knot at Spencer House, a mansion in central London. It is Murdoch's fourth marriage and the first for 59-year-old Hall, an American.

PA Sangma, former India speaker, dies

TNN, New Delhi
PA Sangma, who was Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1996 to 1998, passed away in Delhi yesterday following a brief illness. Sangma was chief minister of Meghalaya from 1988 to 1990.

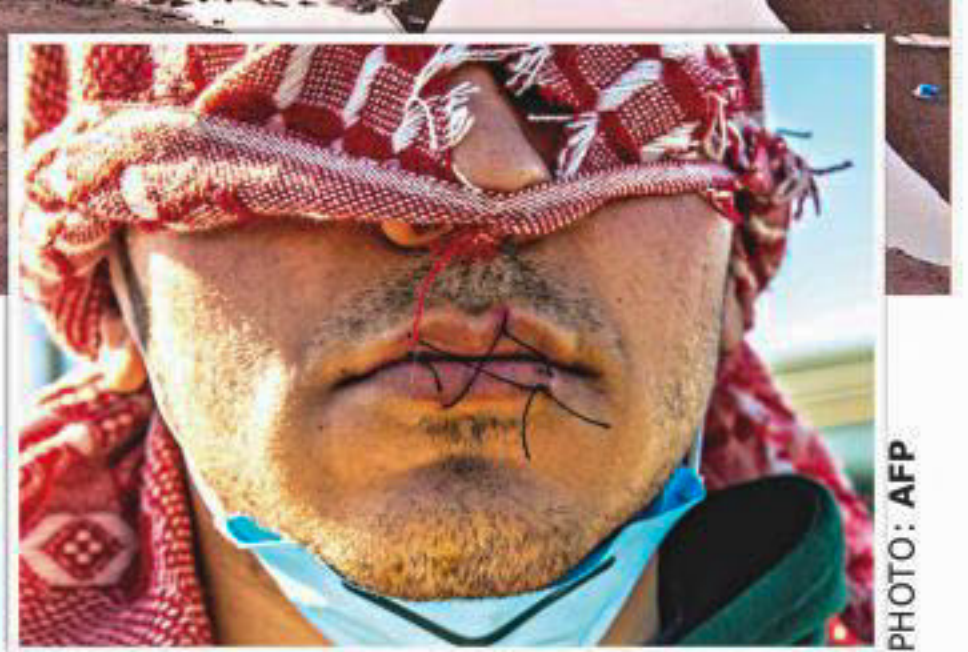
Environmentalist killed in Honduras

AFP, Tegucigalpa
Honduran indigenous activist Berta Caceres, an award-winning environmentalist, was shot and killed in her home Thursday, her family said, labeling her death an assassination. Caceres won the 2015 Goldman Prize, considered the world's top award for grassroots environmental activism, for leading the indigenous Lenca people in a struggle against a hydroelectric dam project that would flood large areas of native lands and cut off water supplies to hundreds.



MIGRANT CRISIS IN EU

People walk between tents at a makeshift camp after night's rainfall near the Greek village of Idomeni at the Greek-Macedonian border yesterday, where thousands of migrants and refugees are stranded. Inset, One of twelve migrants claiming to be from Iran protests with sewn lips against the dismantling of the southern part of the so-called 'Jungle' migrant camp in Calais, northern France. A record 1.2 million asylum-seekers reached Europe in 2015, more than double the previous year, new figures showed yesterday as EU head Donald Tusk met Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan to solve the crisis that poses existential crisis for the 28-nation bloc.



World hails Syria truce

AFP, Paris
World leaders hailed "real progress" in Syria yesterday, but fresh air strikes showed the fragility of the week-old truce and the many obstacles still in the way of peace talks. Warplanes struck a key rebel bastion east of the Syrian capital for the first time since the fragile truce began last weekend, a monitor said.

"Two air strikes hit the edge of the town of Douma in Eastern Ghouta and one person was killed," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. He said the strikes were conducted by either Syrian or Russian planes. Eastern Ghouta, the largest rebel bastion east of Damascus, was regularly and fiercely bombed by government forces, but has been relatively calm since the ceasefire brokered by the United States and Russia.

"This cessation of hostilities is by no means perfect but it has reduced the level of violence, it has created an opportunity for some humanitarian access," said British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond after meeting with his French, German and EU counterparts in Paris.

Developments

Air raids hit rebel bastion despite ceasefire

Denmark widens fight against IS in Syria, Iraq

AL-Qaeda in Syria says they are respecting ceasefire

The group said the focus now was on convincing all parties to return to UN-brokered peace talks in Switzerland. The group also met with Riad Hijab, head of Syria's main opposition body, the High Negotiations Committee which has expressed scepticism that the regime will stick to the truce. "We've encouraged Dr Hijab, whatever his reservations, to be prepared to return to the discussions in Geneva," said Hammond. However, a top Syrian opposition official said that "conditions are not ripe" for a resumption of peace talks set for March 9. Hijab also said he see no place for Assad in the transition process of Syria. Meanwhile Denmark yesterday said it would commit F-16 warplanes to the fight against Islamic State in Syria and 400 military personnel to fight the jihadist group in Iraq. The Danish contribution, which also includes a transport aircraft, would be available from mid-2016. In a new positive sign for peace, although al-Qaeda's wing in Syria has rejected an international effort to halt nearly five years of conflict, its fighters have laid low, careful not to jeopardise the fragile agreement that has slowed if not entirely stopped the war.

Traffickers jailed over Aylan Kurdi's death

AFP, Istanbul
A Turkish court yesterday sentenced two Syrian people smugglers to more than four years in prison over the drowning of Aylan Kurdi, the toddler who became a symbol of Europe's refugee crisis when his lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach. The court in the resort town of Bodrum found Syrian nationals Muwafaka Alabash, 36, and Asem Alfrhad, 35, guilty of trafficking migrants and sentenced them to four years and two months, the Dogan News Agency said. But it cleared them of causing the death of five people "through deliberate negligence", a charge that carried a sentence of up to 35 years in prison. Pictures of the three-year-old Syrian toddler face down in the sand on a Turkish beach triggered global anguish and the public outcry, to a certain extent, spurred the EU into greater action in the crisis. He drowned after his family decided in early September to make the risky journey across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece in an overloaded open boat. Aylan's mother Rihana and brother Ghaleb, four, and two others also died in the same accident. Aylan's father Abdullah Kurdi had been implicated in the tragedy, with Turkish authorities originally accusing him in absentia of being responsible for the deaths and driving the boat at the time of the disaster. However prosecutors had dropped the legal proceedings against Kurdi, who now lives outside of Turkey, at an earlier stage in the trial.

Malaysia cross-party alliance calls for scam-hit PM's ouster

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur
Former Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad yesterday joined hands with long-standing foes, including the party of the jailed Anwar Ibrahim, to crank up pressure on scandal-plagued Prime Minister Najib Razak to quit, marking a seismic political shift. In a dramatic flourish, Mahathir read a statement signed by 58 politicians and anti-corruption activists at a news conference where he was flanked by opposition leaders and some members of the ruling party he has now quit. "We call upon all Malaysians, irrespective of race, political affiliation, creed or parties, young and old, to join us in saving Malaysia from the government headed by Najib Razak," the statement said. One of those beside Mahathir was a close aide of his former protege, opposition leader Anwar, with whom he fell out when he was prime minister in the late 1990s.

'We want freedom in India, not freedom from India'

JNU 'sedition' student clarifies stance in moving speech

AGENCIES
An Indian student leader facing sedition charges has called for "freedom in India" in a rousing speech to students at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), after being released on bail. Kanhaiya Kumar received a hero's welcome at the JNU campus in New Delhi on Thursday night and addressed a large gathering of students and faculty members, cautioning authorities from suppressing freedom of speech and the right to dissent. "The struggle is long. The more you try to suppress us, the higher we will rise...we are not asking for freedom from India, but asking for freedom in India." Kumar said that the BJP govern-

UN rights chief backs Apple in row with FBI

BBC ONLINE
Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, high commissioner for human rights at the United Nations, yesterday warned that a "Pandora's box" will be opened if Apple cooperates with the FBI. The FBI has ordered the tech giant to assist it with unlocking an iPhone used by San Bernadino gunman Syed Farook. Prince Al Hussein said the law enforcement agency "deserves everyone's full support" in its investigation. However, encryption was essential in the interests of freedom, he added. "There are many ways to investigate whether or not these killers had accomplices besides forcing Apple to create software to undermine the security features of their own phones," he said in a statement. "It is potentially a gift to authoritarian regimes, as well as to criminal hackers. "Encryption and anonymity are needed as enablers of both freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to privacy. Without encryption tools, lives may be endangered." The FBI has asked Apple to disable a feature that means the data on an iPhone is erased after 10 incorrect attempts at the four-digit password. Meanwhile, a number of major tech firms have also pledged their support for Apple's refusal to circumvent its own security. They include Twitter, Airbnb, eBay, LinkedIn, Reddit, Amazon, Microsoft, Snapchat and Yahoo. However, a lawyer representing a group of Farook's surviving victims said he would file similar legal paperwork on their behalf in support of the FBI.

Are we alone in this universe?

Scientists hear repeating signal from deep in space

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Scientists have heard a long, repeated sound from deep in space — and nobody is sure where it is coming from. Astronomers found 10 millisecond-long "fast radio bursts", the latest example of a mysterious radio wave coming from outside of our galaxy. Scientists had previously thought that the bursts were singular events. But a new study finds that at least some of the sources send out repeated messages. The finding adds to other strange discoveries about the fast radio bursts that seem to indicate that there may be something unusual causing them. Scientists said last year that some of the messages appear to be coming in a pattern — one that could even be created by alien technology. The new research sheds little new light on what exactly is causing the mes-



16 killed in Yemen care home attack

AFP, Aden
Gunmen attacked a care home run by missionaries in Yemen's jihadist-plagued southern city of Aden yesterday, killing 16 workers including four Indian nuns, officials said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but Aden has seen a surge in attacks by the Islamic State group and rival al-Qaeda. Four gunmen entered the refuge operated by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Aden's Sheikh Othman district, killing a guard before tying up and shooting employees, security officials told AFP. Screams of elderly residents echoed from the home during the shooting rampage, witnesses said. They recounted seeing the bodies of slain workers with their arms tied behind their backs scattered on the blood-stained floor as the aged residents cried out in fear. Apart from the four Indians, the rest of those killed were Yemenis working at the facility, officials said. It is not the first deadly attack on the Mother Teresa order in Yemen. In 1998, three of its nuns were shot dead in western Yemen by a psychiatric patient who had volunteered to fight alongside Bosnian Muslims in 1992 before returning to the Arabian Peninsula country. The latest attack comes with Yemen's internationally recognised government grappling with an Iran-backed rebellion on one side and a growing jihadist presence on the other.

UN rights chief backs Apple in row with FBI

BBC ONLINE
Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, high commissioner for human rights at the United Nations, yesterday warned that a "Pandora's box" will be opened if Apple cooperates with the FBI. The FBI has ordered the tech giant to assist it with unlocking an iPhone used by San Bernadino gunman Syed Farook. Prince Al Hussein said the law enforcement agency "deserves everyone's full support" in its investigation. However, encryption was essential in the interests of freedom, he added. "There are many ways to investigate whether or not these killers had accomplices besides forcing Apple to create software to undermine the security features of their own phones," he said in a statement. "It is potentially a gift to authoritarian regimes, as well as to criminal hackers. "Encryption and anonymity are needed as enablers of both freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to privacy. Without encryption tools, lives may be endangered." The FBI has asked Apple to disable a feature that means the data on an iPhone is erased after 10 incorrect attempts at the four-digit password. Meanwhile, a number of major tech firms have also pledged their support for Apple's refusal to circumvent its own security. They include Twitter, Airbnb, eBay, LinkedIn, Reddit, Amazon, Microsoft, Snapchat and Yahoo. However, a lawyer representing a group of Farook's surviving victims said he would file similar legal paperwork on their behalf in support of the FBI.

interim bail while the police investigate his case. The student union leader denies he was among those chanting anti-India slogans at a rally last month, held to mark the 2013 hanging of Kashmiri Mohammed Afzal Guru over a deadly attack on the Indian parliament. Two other students, Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya, are accused of being among the organisers of the JNU event and have been arrested on the same sedition charge as Kumar. A Delhi government report published on Thursday said while no witness or video evidence could be found implicating Kumar, the role of other students at the rally "must be investigated further". Sedition carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, although convictions are rare.



Petrobras scandal

Brazilian ex-leader Lula detained

AFP, Sao Paulo
Police detained Brazil's powerful ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for questioning and searched his home yesterday as part of a probe into a huge corruption scheme at state oil company Petrobras. Agents searched Lula's house in Sao Paulo, the offices of the Lula Institute, and houses of family members and associates, said Jose Chrispiniano, a spokesman for Lula and his institute. As agents, backed by armed officers in camouflage, went through Lula's house, supporters and opponents demonstrated in the street, shouting and scuffling, AFP journalists said. Prosecutors said Lula was targeted as part of the Operation Car Wash investigation into an embezzlement and bribery conspiracy centered on Petrobras. The corruption scandal, which has already seen a Who's Who of Brazilian politicians and businessmen face charges, is believed to be the biggest ever in Brazil. Officials said about 200 federal police and 30 auditors fanned out across three states, serving 33 warrants for search and seizure and 11 for detention for questioning. The operations in Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Sao Paulo states involved probes into "corruption and money laundering, among other crimes practiced by various people in the context of the Petrobras criminal scheme." Lula, who was president from 2003-2010, remains one of Brazil's most influential figures and his fate is closely linked to that of his successor, President Dilma Rousseff, and the future of the ruling Workers' Party.