

NEWS IN brief

UAE jails 11 for life over 'terror plots'

AFP, Abu Dhabi
A top court in the United Arab Emirates jailed 11 people for life yesterday after convicting them of jihadist links and plotting "terrorist" attacks in the Gulf country, state media reported. The apex court in Abu Dhabi jailed two others for 15 years, 13 for 10 years, six for three years, and two for five years. Seven defendants were acquitted. The 41 defendants were accused of seeking to overthrow the government to set up an Islamic State group-style caliphate in the UAE.

US drone strikes kill 8 in Yemen

REUTERS, Aden
Drone attacks killed eight men suspected of belonging to al Qaeda in southern Yemen on Saturday night, local residents said. Two missiles hit the fighters who had gathered in courtyards in the villages of al-Hudhn and Naqel al-Hayala, residents from the southern coastal province of Abyan told Reuters by phone.

Qaeda used missile to bring down Yemen jet

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Al-Qaeda has acquired sophisticated surface-to-air missiles, The Independent has learned, which were used to shoot down an Emirati fighter jet in a dangerous escalation of the civil war raging in Yemen. A source in Yemen told The Independent that the surface-to-air missile was a Russian-manufactured SA-7 or "Strela".

Turkey halts five migrant boats

AFP, Ankara
The Turkish coastguard yesterday stopped five boats carrying dozens of illegal migrants, mostly from Myanmar, who were trying to reach the Greek island of Lesbos, local media reported. The numbers of people reaching Greece from Turkey have declined since an EU-Turkey deal went into effect on March 20.



(From left, clockwise) Pakistani rescuers and officials gather at the bomb blast site in Lahore; rescuers use a stretcher to shift a body from the site; and women mourn the death of relatives. At least 65 people were killed and more than 200 injured when a bomb ripped through the parking lot of a crowded park in Lahore where Christians were celebrating Easter Sunday, officials said. (Story on page 1) PHOTO: AFP

US PRESIDENTIAL RACE 2016

Sanders trounces Hillary in 3 states

AFP, Seattle
Bernie Sanders made a clean sweep of Democratic election contests in Alaska, Hawaii and Washington, although he barely dented the formidable lead enjoyed by frontrunner Hillary Clinton in the battle for the party's presidential nomination.
US news networks showed Sanders winning by wide margins Saturday's caucus votes in all three western states.
In Washington -- the biggest prize with 101 delegates up for grabs -- Sanders won with an estimated 72.1 percent, against 27.7 for Clinton.
In Hawaii, 71 percent of Democratic caucus-goers supported Sanders, against 29 percent for Clinton.
In Alaska, Sanders' margin of victory was 79.2 percent against 20.8 percent for Clinton.
The 74-year-old Vermont senator celebrated his victories via Twitter late Saturday.
Sanders maintains he has a path to winning the nomination and is plowing ahead state by state, ahead of another round of primary and caucus contests next month.
But the delegate math still dramatically favours Clinton, who headed into Saturday's contests with a big lead among pledged delegates and an even larger advantage when party officials known as "superdelegates" are factored into the equation. Going into Saturday, Clinton had already amassed 1,711 delegates, including superdelegates who are unelected by voters, compared to 952 for Sanders, according to a CNN count. To win the Democratic nomination at the July convention in Philadelphia, 2,383 delegates are needed.
According to RealClearPolitics poll averages, in the remaining states with the three largest delegate allocations -- California, New York and Pennsylvania -- Clinton leads Sanders by nine points, 34 points and 28 points respectively.



New arrests as probe widens

Second France plot suspect charged; police clash with 'hooligan' protesters

AGENCIES
Belgian riot police fired water cannon on Sunday to disperse far-right football hooligans who disrupted mourners at a shrine for victims of the Brussels attacks, as police arrested several suspects in a series of new raids.
Amid fears of further attacks, officials wanted to give police the scope to focus on investigations which have widened to other countries, leading to the arrest of an Algerian in Italy and intelligence cooperation with Germany. Police carried out 13 new raids in Belgium itself.
Hundreds, ignoring an official call, gathered at the Bourse to express solidarity with the victims of the suicide bomb attacks at Brussels airport and on a rush-hour metro train. Thirty one people were killed, including three attackers, and hundreds more injured. Islamic State has claimed responsibility.
Most of the protests were peaceful but white-helmeted riot police used the water cannon against a group of protesters, many of whom local media described as right-wing nationalists, who burst onto the square chanting and carrying banners denouncing Islamic State.
Brussels Mayor Yvan Mayeur said the group were "scoundrels".
In and around Brussels and Antwerp, police

BRUSSELS TERROR ATTACK



carried out 13 new raids in connection with the attacks, with nine people questioned and five later released, the prosecutor's office said.
Belgian press agency Belga yesterday said prosecutors had charged a man in connection with a raid in Paris on Thursday that authorities say foiled an apparent attack plot. Belga named him as Aberdamane A. who prosecutors had said on Saturday was being held after being shot in a raid in the Brussels district of Schaerbeek.
After a series of raids in Belgium and Germany, Italian police also arrested Algerian Djamel Eddine Ouali who is suspected of making docu-

ments for militants linked to the bombings, Italian media said on Saturday.
His name was found in documents in a raid on an apartment near Brussels last October, including some with photos of militants involved in the attacks in Paris and in Brussels and the aliases they used.
Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office was among the European security agencies still hunting for at least eight mostly French or Belgian suspects, Die Welt am Sonntag newspaper reported. They are thought to be on the run in Syria or Europe.
Belgian prosecutors also charged three men on Saturday including Faycal C, whom Belgian media identified as Faycal Cheffou and said he was "the man in the hat", as he has become known, in last Tuesday's airport CCTV footage that showed three men pushing baggage trolleys.
Officials said 24 victims from nine different nationalities had been identified so far from the attacks in Brussels, where the European Union and Nato have their headquarters. Fourteen were identified at the airport and 10 on the metro. A further four people remain unidentified.
In addition, 340 people were wounded, according to the latest official toll on Saturday, of whom 101 are still in hospital, 62 of them in intensive care, many with severe burns.

TRUMP DETAILS 'AMERICA FIRST' FOREIGN POLICY
Donald Trump described his foreign policy as an "America first" approach that will stop the US from being systematically "ripped off," he said in a lengthy interview published Saturday in the New York Times.
During the conversation, he detailed his views on issues ranging from East Asian security to Syria, the Islamic State group and relations with allies such as Saudi Arabia.
Trump said he was not an isolationist, but described the United States as a poor debtor nation that disproportionately funds international alliances such as Nato and the United Nations. Similarly lopsided relationships exist with allies such as Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, he said.
"So America first, yes, we will not be ripped off anymore. We're going to be friendly with everybody, but we're not going to be taken advantage of by anybody," he said.
Asked if Japan should be allowed to have nuclear weapons to protect itself from North Korea, Trump suggested that would be an acceptable situation.
He then slammed President Barack Obama's administration for seeking a political exit for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad while simultaneously fighting the Islamic State group as "madness and idiocy."
Trump, who has repeatedly called for Middle Eastern allies to contribute boots on the ground in the fight against IS, said he would "probably" stop buying oil from countries like Saudi Arabia unless they did so or reimbursed the United States for its role in the fight.

MYANMAR POLITICAL TRANSITION



Army to remain a political force

AL JAZEERA ONLINE
Myanmar's commander-in-chief of the armed forces has stressed that there is a "need" for the military to remain a political force, just days before an elected government is set to take power for the first time in 56 years.
Senior general Min Aung Hlaing, making an Armed Forces Day speech in the capital, Naypyidaw, yesterday, reasserted the military's belief that it is the country's sole unifying force and protector of the constitution.
Though the military had "cooperated with the government and the people", to hold a historic general election in November, which was won by the party of former opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, it was not yet time to step away from the political arena, he said.
"The Tatmadaw has to be present as the leading role in national politics with regards to the ways we stand along the history and the critical situations of the country," Min Aung Hlaing said, referring to the armed forces by their Myanmar name.
The military seized power in a 1962 coup and for decades suppressed all opposition. But it stepped back in 2011, paving the way for a semi-civilian government to prepare for last November's election. However, it still retains important powers.
A quarter of the parliament seats are reserved for unelected military officers, giving them an effective veto over constitutional changes, and the commander-in-chief remains in control of three key main ministries.
More than 10,000 military personnel marched in a parade marking the day in 1945 when a young nationalist leader, General Aung San, and his followers in a fledgling army turned against Japanese forces occupying their country.
Hundreds of veterans, foreign defence attaches and politicians gathered before dawn on a big parade field to watch the ceremony. But conspicuously absent was Aung San's daughter, National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Suu Kyi. She attended the ceremony in 2013 but has not since then.
Also absent was president-elect Htin Kyaw, Suu Kyi's hand-picked leader who will take power on Friday.

PATHANKOT ATTACK

Pakistan probe team arrives in India

AFP, New Delhi
A Pakistani team arrived in New Delhi yesterday to help investigate an attack on an Indian air force base that killed seven soldiers in January, a foreign ministry official said.
India has blamed Islamist militants from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed for the assault on Pathankot air base in the northern state of Punjab, which led to two days of gunbattles.
The foreign ministry official told AFP the five-member team would start work on Monday. Other local media reports said the team would be escorted by Indian investigators to the attack site and allowed to interview eyewitnesses.



A Pakistani Frontier Constabulary official(C)runs from supporters of executed Islamist Mumtaz Qadri during an anti-government rally in Islamabad, yesterday. Pakistani police fired tear gas at thousands of stone-throwing supporters of an Islamist assassin, a month after he was hanged for killing a provincial governor for alleged blasphemy. PHOTO: AFP

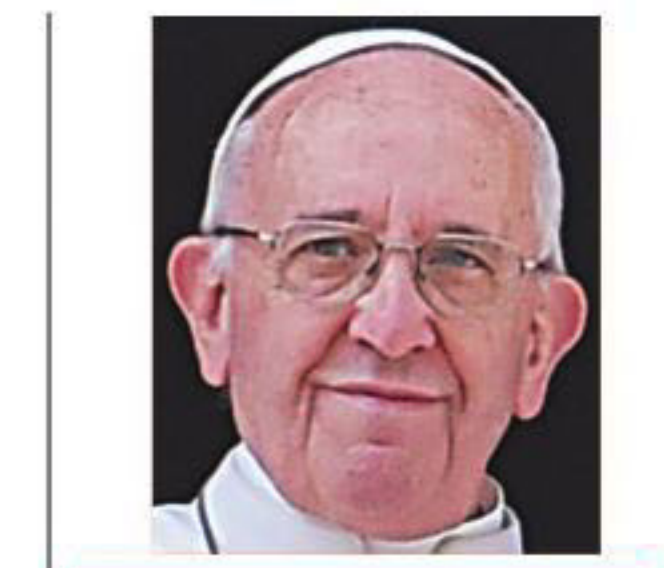
Opponents step up drive to oust Malaysia PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur
Leaders from across Malaysia's political spectrum yesterday said they plan to present a petition to the country's Islamic royalty seeking the removal of scandal-plagued Prime Minister Najib Razak over a corruption crisis.
The highly unusual grouping of heavyweights from the ruling party, the opposition and civil society groups was formed in early March, when it issued a call to "save" Malaysia from disaster by removing Najib.
A succession of speakers pressed that demand during a rally attended by several hundred supporters Sunday, accusing Najib of using his office to thwart scrutiny of the graft allegations and avoid justice.
"(Najib's) leadership undermines the very existence of our institutions," said former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad.
"We want the rule of law and the actions of Najib has destroyed it. He no longer deserves to be the prime minister," he added.
The 90-year-old Mahathir, who dominated Malaysia as premier for 22 years before retiring in 2003, has for months spearheaded calls for Najib's removal.
Najib, 62, is under pressure over allegations that billions of dollars were stolen from a state firm, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), he founded, and over his own acceptance of a mysterious \$681 million payment from overseas. He denies the charges saying he is the victim of a political conspiracy.

PROTEST OVER ISLAMIST ASSASSIN'S HANGING

Pakistan deploys army after clashes in capital

AFP, Islamabad
The Pakistani army deployed troops on the streets of the capital yesterday after thousands of stone-throwing supporters of an Islamist assassin who was hanged last month clashed with police in chaotic scenes.
Mumtaz Qadri was executed on February 29 for killing a Punjab governor over his call for blasphemy reform in what analysts said was a "key moment" in Pakistan's long battle against religious extremism. But it has also divided the conservative Muslim country of 200 million.
An estimated 25,000 supporters of the former police bodyguard gathered in Islamabad's twin city Rawalpindi in the afternoon to offer prayers, before turning toward the heavily-barricaded capital. Riot police fired tear gas to try to prevent them pushing closer to the city centre. Some protesters set fire to a container while chanting slogans.
A military spokesman tweeted late yesterday that the army had been requisitioned to "control" the situation and secure the Red Zone around Parliament, where protesters were gathering.



EASTER MESSAGE

Pope slams 'rejection' of refugees

AFP, Vatican City
Pope Francis yesterday spoke out against the "rejection" of refugees as the European migrant crisis saw its latest desperate scenes on the Greek border with Macedonia.
The pontiff used his Easter address to urge people to offer "welcome and assistance" to those fleeing war and poverty, as Europe struggles with its worst migration crisis since World War II.
During Good Friday prayers, the pope decried what he called Europe's "indifferent and anaesthetised conscience" over migrants and yesterday he took up the theme again.
"The Easter message of the risen Christ... invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future ... fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice," the pope said.
"All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way with death or, in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance."
Francis has long called for the global community to open its doors to refugees and fight xenophobia -- appeals which have intensified since the controversial EU-Turkey deal.