Taliban announces

23 killed in Nepal bus accident

PTI, Kathmandu

At least 23 people were killed yesterday when the bus they were travelling in plunged some 300 metres down the road in a mountainous region in eastern Nepal. Thirty one people have been rescued alive, said police and added that the injured have been admitted to a hospital.

US issues S Arabia travel warning AFP, Washington

The US State Department has issued a travel warning for the US citizens planning to visit Saudi Arabia ahead of President Barack Obama's visit to the Gulf country. Obama is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia on April 21.

3 more charged over Brussels attacks

AFP, Brussels

Belgium yesterday charged two new suspects over last month's deadly Brussels airport and metro bombings and made three fresh arrests in the probe into the November Paris attacks. The two suspects, Smail F and Ibrahim F., were "charged with participation in the activities of a terrorist group, terrorist murders and attempts to commit terrorist murders, as a perpetrator, co-perpetrator or accomplice," a statement

AFP, Berlin

reported yesterday.

Secret agents from several countries,

including intermediaries of the CIA,

have used the services of Panamanian

law firm Mossack Fonseca in order to

"conceal" their activities, German

newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung

have made wide use of the company's

services," wrote the newspaper, which

obtained a massive stash of 11.5 million

documents from the company that is

nies to conceal their activities... Among

them are close intermediaries of the

Mossack Fonseca's clients included

"several players" in the 1980s Iran-

Contra scandal, which saw senior US

officials facilitate secret arms sales to

Iran in a bid to secure the release of

American hostages and fund

The Munich-based newspaper said

CIA," the newspaper reported.

"Agents have opened shell compa-

sending shockwaves around the globe.

"Secret agents and their informants

Seven arrested over India temple tragedy

from prosecutors said.

AFP, Kollam

Police arrested seven people yesterday over a massive explosion and fire during a banned fireworks display that claimed more than 100 lives in southern India, a senior officer said. The blast ripped through concrete buildings and ignited a fire at a Hindu temple complex in Kerala state where thousands had gathered early Sunday to watch the display.



Brazil Impeachment Battle for last votes to seal Rousseff fate

AFP, Brasília

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's fate rested yesterday on the loyalties of the last 100 or so congressional deputies yet to declare how they will vote in a looming impeachment showdown.

In a ruthless and complex contest, supporters and opponents of Brazil's first female president raced to amass the magic number that will make history when the lower house of Congress votes in a week's time.

A congressional committee voted late Monday in a non-binding measure to approve impeachment.

The full house is expected to start voting Sunday or the following Monday. This time, a two thirds majority, or 342 deputies, will be needed to send Rousseff's case to the Senate for

impeachment trial. Anything less and Rousseff -- accused of fiddling accounts to mask the dire state of the government budget during her 2014 re-election -- will have won. The latest survey of the 513 deputies in the lower house by Estadao daily on Monday showed 298 in favour, still short of 342. The count showed 119

opposing impeachment. That left the result in the hands of the 96 deputies still undecided or not stating a position. After winning Monday's skirmish in the committee -- where only a simple majority was required to win -- opponents of Rousseff declared

they were on a roll.



The Panama Papers also reveal that what they earn in each member state of

the 28-nation bloc.

Strasbourg, France.

two percent.

"The Panama Papers have not

changed our agenda but strengthen

our determination to make sure taxes

are paid where profits are generated,"

EU Financial Services Commissioner

Jonathan Hill told a news briefing at

the European Parliament in

tax policy blew up into the open with

the Lux Leaks scandal in 2014, which

exposed secret sweetheart tax deals

given to huge corporations -- including

the likes of IKEA and Pepsi -- by the

These companies are accused of

recycling earnings from across the

globe back through Luxembourg or

other havens where authorities secretly

allow them effective tax rates as low as

said corporate tax avoidance in Europe

cost an estimated 50 to 70 billion a

The Brussels-based Commission

small duchy of Luxembourg.

Longstanding criticism of corporate

INTERNATIONAL

Activists take part in a demonstration outside the European Commission (EC) headquarters ahead of statements by the EC on the effectiveness of existing measures against tax evasion and money-laundering in light of the recent Panama Paper revelations, in Brussels, Belgium, yesterday.

Spies used Mossack Fonseca

"current or former high-ranking offi-

cials of the secret services of at least

three countries... Saudi Arabia,

Colombia and Rwanda" are listed

amongst the company's clients, the

Among them was Sheikh Kamal

Adham, the former Saudi intelligence

chief who died in 1999. Adham "spent

the 1970s as one of the CIA's key inter-

PANAMA PAPERS

mediaries" in the Middle East, the

Meanwhile, the EU yesterday

unveiled plans to force the world's

biggest multinationals to faithfully

report earnings and pay their fair share

of taxes, saying the Panama Papers

The European Commission, the

EU's executive arm, said under the new

rules big companies operating in

scandal added to the need for change.

Sueddeutsche said.

daily said.

PHOTO:

Syria's landmark ceasefire was threatening to fall apart yesterday amid a surge of fresh fighting, especially in northern Aleppo province, just as peace talks were set to

The UN's Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura, who has said the negotiations due to start today would be "crucially important," was in Iran for talks with a key backer of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

This week's round of talks in Geneva will be the second since Assad's regime and rebel forces agreed to a partial truce brokered by Moscow and Washington, which has largely held since February 27.

steps may finally be taken towards resolving the five-

But concern has been growing that a recent rise in violence focused mainly in Aleppo province, which borders Turkey, is putting intense strain on the ceasefire.

were yesterday pressing an advance against the town of Al-Eis, held by fighters from al-Qaeda's local affiliate, Al-Nusra Front, and allied rebels, reports said.

Jihadists like those from Al-Nusra and the Islamic State group are excluded from the ceasefire but in some areas the al-Qaeda militants are allied with rebel forces meant to be covered by the truce.



US, India to share

military logistics, the countries' defence ministers said yesterday, as both sides seek to counter the growing mari-

Logistics Support Agreement that allows the two militaries to use each other's land, air and naval bases for resupplies, repair and rest.

"We have agreed in principle that all the issues are

The two sides would finalise the text of an agreement in coming weeks, Carter said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, faced with an assertive China expanding its influence in the South China Sea and into the Indian Ocean, has signalled its desire to draw closer to the United States. China is also a

Carter is on his second visit to India in less than a year, aimed at cementing defence cooperation in the final

Washington's desire for deeper security cooperation with India has been tricky without the signing of the logistics agreement, as well as two other pacts that would allow for secure communications and the exchange of nautical and other data. The agreements are considered routine between



Supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) burn a poster of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a protest against Abbas's policies, in Gaza City, yesterday. The poster reads, "Leave."

GOP's 'delegate

The New York billionaire, who has been outmaneuvered by Cruz in a series of recent state meetings to select national convention delegates, said the process was set up to protect

"The system is rigged, it's crooked," Trump said on Fox News on Monday, alleging the Colorado convention results showed voters were being denied a voice in the process.

for Cruz, according to an Associated Press count, in the battle for the 1,237 delegates needed to win the nomination on the first ballot and avoid a messy floor fight at the Republican National Convention from July 18-21. But both are at risk of not acquiring enough delegates for a firstballot victory, leaving many free to switch their votes on later ballots.



Manafort to lead his delegate-gathering efforts, complained about Cruz's recent success at local and state party meetings where activists pick the actual delegates who will attend the national convention.

Trump accused Cruz of trying to steal delegates in South Carolina. Trump won the state primary in February, but Cruz supporters got four of the first six delegate slots filled at congressional district meetings on Saturday, according to local media.

"Now they're trying to pick off those delegates one by one," Trump said. "That's not the way democracy is supposed to work. They offer them trips, they offer them all sorts of things

Dozens killed in Turkey

Kurdish militants have been killed in the past 24 hours in attacks and clashes across Turkey's security sources and the army said yesterday.

An estimated 57 people, including eight civilians, were wounded in the attacks, they said.

and hundreds of civilians and soldiers have been killed since the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) resumed its insurgency last summer following a 2-1/2-year ceasefire and peace process.

ruled out any return to the negotiating table and has vowed to crush the PKK, which is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey and its Western allies.

The security sources said operations in Sirnak province and in neighbouring

Hunt begins for new UN chief must agree on the nominee.

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

For the first time in history of the United Nations all member states will get a chance to question the candidates for secretary-general, in a move designed to make the usually secret selection process for the world's top diplomatic post more transparent.

The eight hopefuls for one of the world's most high-profile jobs will also hold town hall meetings with the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

They will each pitch their credentials and then answer questions in a two-hour session.

Last year, the General Assembly responded to a demand from many countries that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's successor be chosen in a more open process, unanimously adopting a resolution allowing public hearings on how candidates would respond to global crises and run the UN's far-flung bureaucracy.

The search for a successor to Ban - a former South Korean foreign minister who will step down at the end of the year after two five-year terms - has also prompted a push by more than a quarter of UN states for the first female leader.

While the 15-member Security Council will formally recommend a candidate to the 193-member General

Assembly, the General Assembly vote has long been seen as a rubber stamp. Nations with veto powers - the US, Russia, Britain, China and France

Helen Clark

candidates with the General Assembly,

and the winner could still be selected

in a backroom Security Council deal as

Diplomats told the Reuters news

has been the case for seven decades.

rotating the post between regions.

Danilo Turk

As part of the changes introduced by

the General Assembly last year, the list of

candidates has been made public for the

first time, with nomination letters and

democratisation of a secretive process

controlled by the five veto powers. But

there is no requirement for the five to

pay attention to the popularity of

On the surface, it is a shift towards

even the candidate's CVs posted online.







so the General Assembly can elect the

by Colombia, and several civil society

groups want the UN's first female

secretary-general since its creation at

so far are women: UNESCO Director-

General Irina Bokova of Bulgaria;

former Croatian Foreign Minister

Half of the candidates nominated

A group of at least 56 countries, led

next UN chief in October.

the end of World War II.





Antonio Guterres

Vesna Pusic; Moldova's former Foreign Minister Natalia Gherman; and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who heads the UN Development Programme.

Also in the race are former agency that Moscow wanted the UN chief to come from Eastern Europe, in Macedonian Foreign Minister Srgjan line with an informal tradition of Kerim; Montenegro Foreign Minister Igor Luksic; former Slovenian President Danilo Turk; and former UN The council is expected to hold its High Commissioner for Refugees first "straw poll" - a sort of informal Antonio Guterres, who is also a former vote - behind closed doors in July and aims to have a decision by September Portuguese prime minister.

'spring offensive' AFP, Kabul The Afghan Taliban yesterday announced the start of their "spring offensive" even as the government in Kabul tries to

bring the insurgents back to the negotiating table to end their drawn-out conflict. The Taliban said in a statement they would "employ large-scale attacks on enemy positions across the country" during the offensive they have dubbed "Operation Omari"

in honour of the movement's late founder Mullah Omar,

whose death was announced last year.

The annual spring offensive normally marks the start of the "fighting season", though this winter the lull was shorter and they continued to battle government forces albeit with less intensity. The statement promised "martyrdom-seeking and tacti-

cal attacks against enemy strongholds", a reference to suicide bombings -- a strategy the group has long resorted to against its enemies, the Afghan police and army, which they view as "stooges" of the West. The Islamists, who have been waging an insurgency since being toppled from power in 2001, also promised attacks

on the 13,000 Nato troops currently stationed in the country, officially in a training and advisory role since the end of their combat mission in 2014. "By employing such a multifaceted strategy it is hoped

that the foreign enemy will be demoralised and forced to evict our nation," they said. The Taliban have made the departure of all foreign forces

a precondition to the resumption of direct peace talks with Kabul which began last summer in Pakistan but ended abruptly after it was revealed that Mullah Omar had been dead for two years.



AFP, Beirut

resume in Geneva.

It has raised hopes that year-old conflict, which has devastated the country and left more than 270,000 dead.

Pro-government forces



military logistics Deepen maritime ties with eye on China

REUTERS, New Delhi India and the United States have agreed in principle to share

time assertiveness of China. Washington has for years urged New Delhi to sign a

India has had concerns that a logistics agreement would commit it to hosting US troops at its bases, or draw it into a military alliance with the United States and undermine its traditional autonomy.

But after years of delays, the two sides said an agreement was in hand, although not yet ready for signing.

resolved," US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter told reporters in New Delhi after talks with his Indian counterpart, Manohar Parrikar.

close ally of India's arch rival, Pakistan.

months of Barack Obama's presidency.

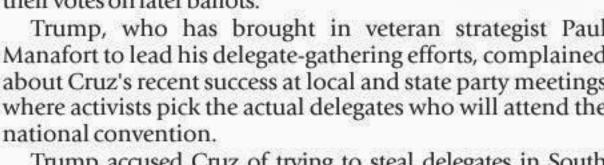
the United States and its other defence partners.

rules rigged'

AGENCIES Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump lashed out at what he called the party's "rigged" delegate selection rules on Monday after rival Ted Cruz swept all of Colorado's 34 delegates over the weekend.

party insiders and shut out insurgent candidates.

Trump has 743 bound delegates to 545



and you're allowed to do that. You can buy all these votes."

clashes

REUTERS, Diyarbakir

Six Turkish soldiers and 30 turbulent southeast region,

Thousands of militants

The government has

Iraq and Syria had been stepped up and that gunfire and explosions could be heard in the area where earlier one soldier was killed and three others wounded.