

NEWS IN brief

25 Palestine children killed in 3 months

AFP, Jerusalem
Twenty-five Palestinian children were killed in the last three months of 2015 during a wave of anti-Israeli attacks and the number detained was the highest in seven years, the UN children's agency said. It said more than 1,300 Palestinian children were injured during the spike in attacks. UNICEF also voiced alarm over the number of Palestinian children aged between 12 and 17 held by the Israeli army, noting the tally stood at 422 at the end of December according to the Israeli prison service.

Blast kills three at Afghan police camp

AFP, Kandahar
A Taliban suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden car at a police training centre in the opium-rich southern province of Helmand yesterday, killing at least three people and wounding nine others, officials said. The attack in Nad Ali district comes in the midst of the Taliban's annual spring offensive launched last month, in what is expected to be the worst fighting season in 15 years of war.

Islam does not 'belong' in Germany: poll

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Chancellor Angela Merkel's public calls for tolerance and inclusivity are increasingly falling on deaf ears, a new survey into Germany's attitudes towards Islam shows. A new poll shows almost two-thirds of Germans think Islam does not "belong" in their country. In a marked increase from a similar survey conducted six years ago in which a minority of Germans (47 per cent) thought Islam had no place in their nation, the latest poll shows the figure is now at 60 per cent.



Indian villagers carry containers home after collecting supplies of potable water from a well following a tanker's daily delivery in Shahapur, some 130 kms southwest of Mumbai, yesterday. India is officially in the grip of its worst water crisis in years, with the government saying that about 330 million people, or a quarter of the population, are suffering from drought after the last two monsoons failed. PHOTO: AFP



'Holier-than-thou' attitude causing conflicts Says Modi

PTI, Ujjain
Warning that global warming and terrorism have become the world's biggest concerns, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said that shedding the "holier-than-thou" attitude is the key to overcoming these issues and resolving conflicts. "World's biggest concerns are global warming and terrorism... the holier than thou attitude apparently is behind them," Modi said addressing the valedictory session of the three-day international conference on "Living the Right Way" on the sidelines of Simhastha Kumbh mela here. "The world is passing through two types of crises. On the one hand there is global warming while on the other there is terrorism. What is the solution? What is behind their genesis... simply holier than thou attitude or (the thinking) that my way is better than yours. This is the thing which is dragging us towards conflict," he said. Strongly opposing attempts at expansionism, he said this was not a solution to the problems. "Expansionism is another thing that is leading us towards conflict. Time has changed. Expansionism is not a solution to the problems. We should not go horizontal. It is not a solution. We need to go vertical and raise ourselves from within," Modi said. The PM also released 51-point 'Simhastha Declaration' jointly with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivra Chouhan. Simhastha Kumbh Mela is one of world's largest spiritual gatherings held once in 12 years when lakhs of devotees, including hundreds of sadhus, take dip in river Kishipra.

US warns of China troops build-up on India border

Says India ready to join elite nuke club refuting Sino-Pak objection

PTI, Washington
China has increased defence capabilities and deployed more troops along the Indian border, the Pentagon has said, as it warned of increasing Chinese military presence including bases in various parts of the world, particularly Pakistan. "We have noticed an increase in capability and force posture by the Chinese military in areas close to the border with India," Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for East Asia Abraham M Denmark told reporters during a news conference here after Pentagon submitted its annual 2016 report to the US Congress on 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China'. However, Denmark said it is difficult to conclude on the real intention behind this. "It is difficult to say how much of this is driven by internal considerations to maintain internal stability, and how much of it is an external consideration," he said in response to a question on China upgrading its military command in Tibet. Referring to US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter's recent trip to India, Denmark said he had a very positive and productive visit. "We're going to continue to

presence including bases in various parts of the world, in particular Pakistan - with which it has a "long-standing friendly relationship and similar strategic interests". China and Pakistan may not agree, but the United States believes that India is ready to enter the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Hours after China defended its blocking India from becoming part of the NSG, the US on Friday said that India does in fact meet the missile technology control regime requirements for entry into the NSG. The remarks about India's eligibility for the NSG came in response to a question about reports that China and Pakistan have joined hands to oppose India becoming a member of the NSG. US sources recently told news agency ANI that they are disappointed with Chinese tactics of "using Pakistan's non credentials with the NSG to settle scores with India".



enhance our bilateral engagement with India, not in the China context, but because India is an increasingly important player by themselves. And we are going to engage India because of its value," he said. The Defence Department also warned of China's increasing military

US to renew most Myanmar sanctions

AFP, Washington

The United States plans to renew the bulk of its sanctions against Myanmar when they expire next week, but will make some changes aimed at boosting investment and trade, according to several senior US officials and congressional aides. An announcement on extending much of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, could come as soon as Tuesday ahead of a visit to the Southeast Asian nation by Secretary of State John Kerry on May 22, officials said. The US Treasury Department has significantly eased sanctions against Myanmar by issuing general licenses that give companies and investors exemptions to sanctions targeting more than 100 individuals and businesses, including some of Myanmar's biggest business players. US officials began lifting trade and financial sanctions against the country after military leaders launched reforms that led to a civilian government being formed in 2011, beginning its transformation from a half-century as an international pariah. In December, Treasury temporarily relaxed trade restrictions on the country also known as Burma by allowing all shipments to go through its ports and airports for six months. This time, Washington will likely offer more general licenses to specific companies, and take some people off Treasury's list of "Specially Designated Individuals" targeted for sanctions, congressional aides and US officials said.

IS capital put on emergency

Says US; Jihadists attack Syrian hospital, kill 20

AGENCIES
US military officials are monitoring reports that Islamic State have declared a state of emergency in Raqqa. Social media and news reports that suggest IS may have come under siege in its self-declared capital in Syria are being closely watched by the US-led anti-IS coalition. Col Steve Warren, spokesman for the coalition said: "We have seen this declaration of emergency in Raqqa, whatever that means." "We know this enemy feels threatened, as they should," he told CNN on Friday. Media reports have indicated that the terrorist group is moving personnel around the city and attempting to put up covers to shield potential targets from airstrikes and ground attacks. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who are fighting to liberate IS-occupied land, Spokesman Tajir Kobani announced earlier this week that commanders of the SDF-affiliated groups in Northern Syria had

SYRIA CRISIS
Hezbollah says Islamist extremists killed military chief
Turkish shelling, coalition air strike kills 45 IS militants

coordinated plans for a joint final operation for liberating Raqqa from the IS. Meanwhile, Lebanese Shia militant group Hezbollah yesterday blamed Sunni extremists for killing its top military commander in Syria and vowed to keep fighting to defend President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The IS jihadist group, meanwhile, overran a government-controlled hospital in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor, killing 20 members of pro-regime forces and taking medical staff hostage, a monitor said. Badreddine, who was on a US terror sanctions blacklist and wanted by Israel, was killed in a blast on Thursday night near Damascus international airport. In Deir Ezzor, IS attacked Al-Assad hospital yesterday as it pressed an advance aimed at controlling all of the oil-rich city and its vital airbase, the Observatory said. The attack sparked clashes with regime forces providing security for the hospital in which six jihadists were also killed, the monitor said.



Supporters of Federal Alliance, a coalition of Madhes-based parties and other ethnic political parties and organizations, protest against the constitution in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Venezuela in state of emergency

Maduro accuses US of plotting coup as Washington warns of 'imminent collapse'

AFP, Caracas
Venezuela braced for protests yesterday after President Nicolas Maduro declared a state of emergency to combat the "foreign aggression" he blamed for an economic crisis that has pushed the country to the brink of collapse. The opposition called on protesters to flood an avenue in western Caracas to pressure the authorities to allow a referendum to remove the Socialist leader from power, in line with the constitution. Maduro's camp called a rival demonstration in the center of the capital, where he was to announce new measures to address a crippling recession that has led to food shortages, soaring prices, riots, looting and vigilante justice. The economic crisis, together with an electricity shortage, has already forced the government to decree daily power cuts across most of the country, close schools on Fridays, and reduce the workweek to two days for government employees. The embattled president, who declared a state of "economic emergency" in January, expanded it



Friday to a full-blown state of emergency to fight what he called "threats from abroad." In an address to the nation, Maduro said the measures, initially decreed for three months, will likely be extended through 2017. He did not specify if they will limit civil rights. The original economic decree authorized the government to seize private business assets to guarantee the supply of basic goods. The new decree, he said, is "a fuller, more com-

prehensive protection for our people," which "guarantees peace, guarantees stability, that will allow us... to recover the country's productive capacity." Maduro regularly blames US and local business interests for what his administration calls an "economic war" on oil-dependent Venezuela, whose economy has sunk in tandem with global crude prices. Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves, but its economy contracted 5.7 percent last year and its official inflation rate topped 180 percent. Senior US intelligence officials believe Maduro's government could be overthrown in a popular uprising this year, The Washington Post reported yesterday. "You can hear the ice cracking," an intelligence official said. "You know there's a crisis coming." The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said US policymakers' main concern is that the country does not collapse. They have been especially disappointed by the undisciplined, divided opposition, they said.

Egypt court jails 51 for Saudi islands protest

BBC ONLINE
Egypt has sentenced 51 people to two years each in prison for protesting against a decision last month to cede two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. There were 33 defendants present in the Cairo courtroom to hear the verdicts, while the rest were out on bail. Family and friends of the defendants cried in shock outside the courthouse, reports said. The decision to hand over the islands to Saudi Arabia sparked a backlash among many Egyptians. It was made by Egyptian president Abdul Fattah al-Sisi during a rare visit by Saudi Arabia's King Salman, during which the Saudi king announced plans for aid and investment in Egypt. Critics says President Sisi "sold" the uninhabited islands, Tiran and Sanafir, in return for the investments. But the Egyptian government maintains that the islands always belonged to Saudi Arabia, and were only being looked after by Egypt since the 1950s. Both secular and Islamist activists called for people to demonstrate against the transfer of the islands. Police dispersed the protests in April, arresting dozens of people, many of whom were later charged with participation in illegal rallies.



My tax rate is 'none of your business'

Says Trump
REUTERS, Washington/New York
Donald Trump on Friday picked a prominent climate change skeptic to help him craft his energy policy and pushed back against renewed calls that he release his income tax returns - saying his tax rate is "none of your business." The presumptive Republican presidential nominee is seeking to build out his policy proposals as the pivots from campaigning for his party's nomination to a likely general election matchup with Democratic rival Hillary Clinton. Among those he has asked for help is US Republican Representative Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, one of the country's most ardent oil and gas drilling advocates and climate change skeptics. Trump also took heat on Friday for not releasing his tax returns, something that American presidential candidates have done for decades. Trump has said the Internal Revenue Service was auditing his returns and he wanted to wait until the review was over before making them public. Pressed on what tax rate he pays, Trump refused to say. "It's none of your business," he said in ABC's "Good Morning America." The candidate has said there is nothing voters can learn from his tax filings.