

# NEWSIN brief

## Iran intercepts US destroyer

AFP, Washington

Four Iranian warships sped close to two US Navy guided missile destroyers with their weapons uncovered in the Strait of Hormuz in an "unsafe and unprofessional" encounter between the longtime foes, American defense officials said. The USS Nitze shot warning flares, sounded its whistles and attempted unsuccessfully to communicate with the Iranian boats during Tuesday's incident.

## Kerry in Saudi talks on Yemen, Syria, Libya

AFP, Jeddah

US Secretary of State John Kerry was holding talks with his Gulf counterparts and a British minister in Saudi Arabia yesterday on the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Libya. The coordination with Washington's major Middle East allies came on the eve of Syria talks in Geneva between Kerry and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

## Pellets leave 3,000 injured in Kashmir

THE HINDU ONLINE

Around 51 percent of the 5,800 civilians injured in Kashmir in the ongoing violence were hit by pellets and most of them were in constituencies represented by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in south Kashmir. Official data relating to 45 days of street violence in Kashmir showed that around 3,000 civilians were injured by pellets and 122 by bullets.

## Tutu hospitalised for recurrent illness

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's retired archbishop Desmond Tutu was on Wednesday hospitalised for a nagging infection, one of his daughters said. The 84-year-old Nobel Peace laureate "admitted himself to a Cape Town hospital today for treatment to a recurring infection," said Thandeka Tutu-Gxashe in a statement. "He is expected to remain in hospital for a week or two," she added.

## Karachi elects prisoner as mayor

AFP, Karachi

The Pakistani port megacity of Karachi Wednesday elected as mayor a politician who is currently in jail on sedition and terrorism charges, a day after the leader of his party was charged with treason. Waseem Akhtar, a former minister and parliamentarian of the influential Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), won the mayoral poll by a landslide with 196 of the total 294 votes cast by the city's municipal authorities.



Afghan women students from the American University, who were trapped inside the premises during an attack by militants, are escorted by Afghan police forces at the end of a nearly 10-hour raid at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul yesterday. Sixteen people, including eight students, were killed and two gunmen were shot dead before the assault ended.

PHOTO: AFP

# Maldives leader faces plot to overthrow him

Report says opponents with the support of 'external forces looking to move against Yameen within weeks'

REUTERS, Colombo

Maldives President Abdulla Yameen, whose administration has jailed most of his opponents, is aware of an opposition plot to overthrow him with the support of "external forces", the president's spokesman said yesterday.

The BBC, citing unidentified sources, reported earlier that Yameen was facing a "removal plot" by opponents "looking to move against him within weeks".

Best known as an exotic tourist destination, the Indian Ocean island nation has been mired in political unrest since its first democratically elected leader, Mohamed Nasheed, was ousted in February 2012.

"The administration is aware of Maldives United Opposition is trying to 'legally' overthrow the government with the help of external forces," Yameen's spokesman, Ibrahim Hussain Shihab, told Reuters by telephone

from the capital, Male, citing the opposition.

He declined to say if he thought it was a serious plot.

Nasheed, now in exile in Britain after being allowed out of jail to go there for medical treatment, formed the Maldives United Opposition (MUO) in June with the aim of toppling Yameen's rule.

Nasheed was sentenced to 13 years in jail on terrorism charges after a trial in 2015 that was widely denounced as politically motivated.

Shihab, asked who the "external forces" were, said the plan was drawn up by those living abroad.

The international spokesman for Nasheed's party, Hamid Abdul Ghafoor, said the opposition was working to oust the government and was ready to set up a transitional government if Yameen's administration fell.



# Russia launches war games

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday launched large-scale snap military drills, putting its troops on full combat readiness in districts bordering Ukraine and the Baltic states, the defence minister said.

"In accordance with the decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (President Vladimir Putin), a spot check started today," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said in televised comments.

Troops in the country's southern, central and western military districts, as well as the air force, northern fleet and paratroopers were in "full combat" mode as of 0400 GMT, he said.

The drills -- which are taking place in military districts that encompass the contested Crimea peninsula, the region that borders Ukraine and Nato members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as territory spanning from the Ural mountains to central Siberia -- are set to last until the end of the month.

Shoigu did not reveal how many troops are taking part in the exercises.

Relations between Nato and Russia have soured since Moscow annexed the Crimea peninsula of Ukraine in March 2014, and eastern European countries are worried

# SCORPENE SUBMARINE DATA LEAK India takes up the issue with France

THE HINDU ONLINE

As part of the investigation into the leak of information pertaining to the Scorpene submarine, India is taking up the issue with foreign governments concerned through diplomatic channels to verify the authenticity of the reports.

"The Indian Navy has taken up the matter with the Director-General of Armament of the French Government expressing concern over this incident and has requested the French government to investigate this incident with urgency and share their findings with the Indian side," the Navy said in a statement yesterday.

"An internal audit of procedures to rule out any security compromise is also being undertaken," the statement noted.

The documents posted on the website of The Australian newspaper were examined and declared that they "do not pose any security compromise as the vital parameters have been blacked out", it said.

But the fact remains that the blacking out was deliberately done by the news agency as they were being made public as proof as stated by the agency itself. However, the original documents are not blacked out and are still out in the open, which is the bigger concern.

As a matter of precaution, the Navy said, the government was examining the impact if the information contained in the documents claimed to be available with the Australian sources is compromised.



# Myanmar weighs quake damage

AFP, Bagan

Myanmar took stock of toppled spires and crumbling temple walls in the ancient capital Bagan yesterday after a powerful earthquake hit the country, killing three and damaging the top tourist destination.

Two young girls and a man died in Magway region where the 6.8 magnitude quake struck Wednesday evening, cracking buildings across the centre of the country and sending tremors that were felt as far away as Bangkok and Kolkata.

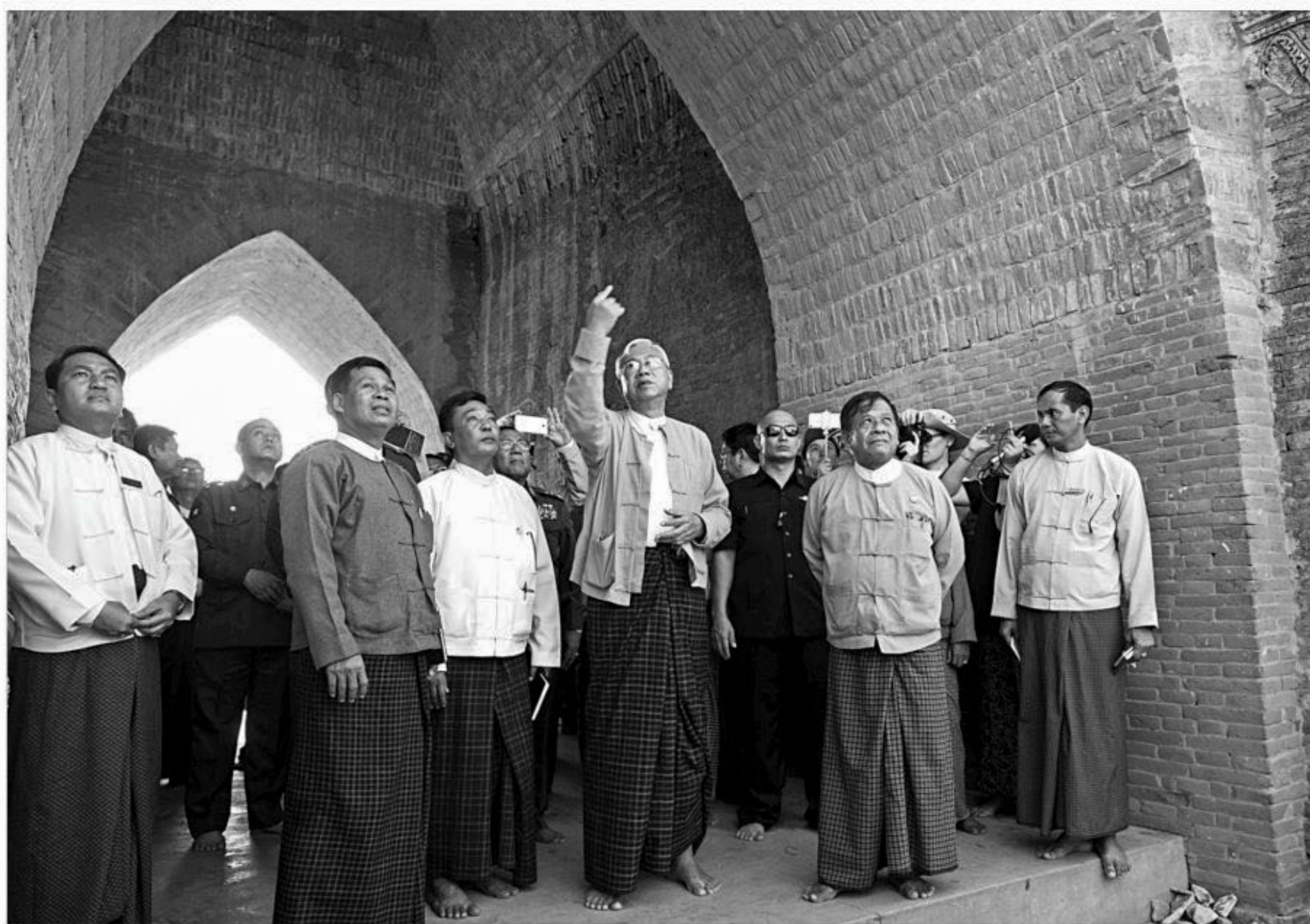
Yesterday, Myanmar's new civilian president Htin Kyaw travelled to Bagan -- the country's most famous archaeological site -- to inspect some of the nearly 200 pagodas damaged by the quake.

The ancient city is home to a vast plain of more than 2,500 Buddhist monuments that are among Myanmar's most venerated religious sites and a top draw for its growing tourism industry.

Teams of government-dispatched engineers and architects spent the day surveying the wreckage, while workers cleared piles of bricks, swept the grounds and sorted through fragments of murals.

"We will take experts' opinions and then try to see what is the best way to restore it. But it will be a very lengthy process and quite expensive," the president told reporters after visiting several of the damaged stupas.

Zaw Htay, a government spokesman, said Myanmar's de facto leader and veteran democracy activist Aung Sang Suu Kyi has urged authorities "not to rush" in renovating the damaged temples.



Myanmar president Htin Kyaw (C) and government officials inspect the damaged ancient pagoda of Sulamani yesterday a day after a 6.8 magnitude earthquake hit Bagan.

PHOTO: AFP

# Indian man carries dead wife's body for 10km

NDTV ONLINE

It's an image that will haunt India for many days. In one of the country's poorest districts in Odisha, a man walked 10 km with his wife's body on his shoulder, his weeping 12-year-old daughter by his side.

Dana Majhi had no vehicle to take home his wife's body after she died of tuberculosis at a government hospital in Kalahandi, about 60 km from his village. He says he pleaded for a vehicle, but was refused one.

So he wrapped his 42-year-old wife Amang Dei's body in a sheet, hoisted it on his shoulder and began to walk home. His daughter walked by his side, holding a bag with their meagre belongings, weeping.

"I told the hospital authorities that I am a poor man and cannot afford a

vehicle. I kept requesting them but they said they could not help," Majhi said to a television crew that found him after he had walked about 10 km with the body.

The TV crew reportedly called up a senior officer and arranged an ambulance for the remaining journey to Majhi's village.

Kalahandi's District Collector Brunda D has alleged that Majhi left the hospital in the middle of the night without informing anyone. "If he had asked for help, we would have provided it," she said adding that the administration has now offered him help with the funeral under a government scheme.

Odisha had also launched the "Mahaparayana" scheme in February, offering to transport bodies from government hospitals free of charge, but that service was not available to Majhi.



# Missile test the 'greatest success'

Says N Korean leader Kim

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un declared a submarine-launched missile test the "greatest success", state media said yesterday, as the UN weighed a condemnation of the launch which appears to advance Pyongyang's nuclear strike capability.

The US mainland and the Pacific are now "within the striking range" of the North's army, the official KCNA news agency reported Kim as saying after Wednesday's launch.

The missile was fired from a submarine submerged off the northeastern port of Sinpo on Wednesday, according to South Korea's military. It flew 500 kilometres (around 300 miles) towards Japan, far exceeding any previous submarine-launched tests.

The UN Security Council met for two hours on Wednesday to discuss North Korea's latest provocative move and agreed to consider a statement condemning the launch.

# Asia's ageing population to cost \$20 trillion: study

AFP, Singapore

Asia's population is ageing faster than anywhere in the world, a study said yesterday, warning the swelling ranks of the elderly will cost the region \$20 trillion in healthcare by 2030.

Health systems, businesses and families across Asia-Pacific will come under huge pressure as some 200 million people pass the age of 65 by then, according to the Singapore-based Asia Pacific Risk Center.

Yearly spending on caring for the elderly is expected to reach \$2.5 billion -- five times the cost in 2015 -- the study said.

"The Asia-Pacific region is ageing at a faster rate than any other region in the world," said APRC executive director Wolfram Hedrich.

Surging growth in Asia over the past few decades prompted an baby boom in many Asia-Pacific countries, creating a large and cheap labour force that in turn boosted productivity and incomes.

But that trend is now reversing as the baby-boomers age, leaving the young to look after them -- either by staying at home or paying for their care.

"Many Asia-Pacific countries are transiting from a period when they reaped a 'demographic dividend' to one where they face the prospect of paying a 'demographic tax'," the study said.

By 2030, there will be 511 million elderly people in the region, out of 3.8 billion, according to the study.

Japan will become the first "ultra-aged" country, with elderly people accounting for 28 percent of its population, while a fifth of people in Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan will be 65.

The APRC warned governments would need to invest heavily to care for their ageing populations, warning current levels are "unsustainable" as medical costs are growing faster than the economy in many countries.



# BRAZIL POLITICAL CRISIS Rousseff's impeachment trial opens

AFP, Brasilia

The impeachment trial of Brazil's first woman president, Dilma Rousseff, got underway yesterday with high expectations that the suspended leader of Latin America's biggest economy will be sacked within days.

The Senate trial was opened by Supreme Court president Ricardo Lewandowski half an hour late in the blue-carpeted chamber at 9:30 am.

The proceedings in the capital Brasilia were considered almost sure to result in Rousseff, 68, being found guilty of cooking the budget books to mask the depth of economic problems during her 2014 reelection campaign.

If she is removed from office, her former vice president turned rival Michel Temer will be sworn in to serve until 2018, shifting Brazil to the right after 13 years of leftist rule under Rousseff's Workers' Party.

Rousseff, who was tortured and imprisoned by the 1970s dictatorship for membership in a Marxist urban guerrilla group, swore to resist what she calls a coup.

"We will fight to reinforce democracy in our country with the same force that I fought against the military dictatorship," she told supporters late Wednesday in Brasilia.

The trial will climax Monday when the president, who was suspended from office in May, addresses the Senate herself for the first time. A vote is then expected within 48 hours, with a two-thirds majority of the 81 senators required to bring Rousseff down.