

NEWS IN brief

One journo killed in every 4.5 days: UN

AFP, Paris
One journalist is killed every four-and-a-half days, according to a shocking report released by UNESCO yesterday. During the last decade, 827 journalists have been killed while on the job, the UNESCO director-general's report said. The worst hit areas were Arab States including Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Latin America is the next worst affected region, the report said.

Saudi women driving drive hits road-block

AFP, Riyadh
Saudi Arabia's Shura Council, which advises the cabinet, has turned down a proposal to study the issue of women's driving, a Shura member told AFP yesterday. The kingdom is the only country where they are not allowed to drive. The proposal failed to get the required 50 percent plus one support among the council's 150 members, who include 30 women.

Two cops killed in Iowa 'ambush'

AFP, Washington
Two police officers in the US state of Iowa were shot dead in separate attacks yesterday, with both "ambushed" as they sat in their cars, authorities said. They added that police had no information on how many suspects were involved or who they were, The Des Moines Register said.

300 schools shut down in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar
Hundreds of schools were ordered to close indefinitely in Kashmir yesterday after shelling by Indian and Pakistani troops in the disputed region killed 14 civilians in two days. Authorities on the Indian-administered side of Kashmir said nearly 300 schools had been ordered to close from yesterday, following the death of 8 civilians on Tuesday. On the Pakistani side, around 25 schools would be closed for the rest of the week after six civilians were killed since Monday.



A newly elected lawmaker is restrained by security after attempting to read out his Legislative Council oath at Legco in Hong Kong, yesterday. In the third consecutive week of chaos in the legislature, two pro-independence lawmakers entered the Legislative Council (Legco) yesterday despite being banned from doing so, pending the result of a judicial review into whether they can take up their seats. PHOTO: AFP

Envoys visit strife-hit Rakhine state

AGENCIES
Foreign diplomats visited flashpoint areas of Myanmar's strife-torn Rakhine state yesterday, authorities said, as pressure mounts on the government to address accusations of rights abuses in a region home to the Muslim Rohingya minority. The military has heavily restricted access to the state's northwestern strip, which abuts Bangladesh, since surprise raids on border posts left nine police dead on October 9. The hunt for the culprits, who the government says are radicalised Rohingya Muslims, has seen more than 30 people killed, dozens arrested and 15,000 flee their homes in fear. The government has denied allegations that security forces have raped villagers, looted towns and torched homes belonging to the Rohingya and is keen to show that its operations to flush out the attackers were proportionate. The ambassadors of China, the United States and United Kingdom were among diplomats and UN officials who arrived in the area yesterday morning, Myanmar's Ministry of Information said on its website. They were joined by a high-level Myanmar government delegation "to study villages in Maungdaw district... from November 2nd to 3rd" the ministry added. A local policeman, requesting anonymity, said the ambassadors began the day by "checking the area around Wapaik village near Kyikanpyin BGP commanding office," referring to the Border Guard Police post hit by the attack on October 9. Later a hundreds-strong group of Rohingya met their convoy as it toured the area. Meanwhile, a group of parliamentarians from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) yesterday urged Myanmar to probe reports of human rights abuses in Rakhine state. Asean Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) has urged to conduct a "thorough and impartial investigation into reports of abuses by security forces" against civilians in Rakhine. It also called on the military to allow aid workers and journalists access to affected areas in order to provide humanitarian assistance and document developments.

FBI releases Bill Clinton's closed case files

AFP, Washington
The FBI has unexpectedly released documents concerning ex-president Bill Clinton's pardon of the husband of a wealthy Democratic donor, in a surprise move just days before the election. The release of the heavily redacted 129-page report over the pardon of trader Marc Rich - an investigation that closed in 2005 without charges -- triggered questions from Democrats already angered by the FBI's probe into hundreds of thousands of newly uncovered emails possibly linked to Hillary Clinton. Rich was indicted on federal charges of tax evasion in the United States. He was a fugitive from the Department of Justice -- at a time one of the FBI's most wanted -- living in exile in Switzerland at the time of his indictment. He died there in 2013. Bill Clinton pardoned him on his last day in office on January 20, 2001. The FBI opened its investigation into the pardon later that year. Rich's ex-wife Denise Eisenberg Rich, whose name was redacted from the FBI files, "has been a major political donor to the Democratic Party, and these donations may have been intended to influence the fugitive's pardon," reads a bureau note requesting that a preliminary investigation be opened. Some of the donations went to the William J. Clinton Presidential Foundation, the predecessor to the Clinton Foundation, according to the document. The Rich case fell under the watch of current FBI Director James Comey, then a younger prosecutor.

Black turnout drops

AGENCIES
Black voters are failing to turn out in the numbers they did to support Barack Obama at the last US election, reports indicate, in what could be a serious blow to Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton. The dip in African-American turnout has been observed in some key swing states, which will hold the key to deciding the election on 8 November. A CNN analysis of the demographics of the 24.4 million Americans who had already cast their votes by yesterday morning suggested Republicans were in a better position than they were in previous presidential elections in Florida, Iowa, North Carolina and Ohio, while Democrat turnout had improved in Colorado and Arizona. Clinton has consistently polled much stronger among black voters than her Republican rival Donald Trump, but analysts said it was always going to be a struggle to maintain the robust turnout that voted in the first black US president in 2008 and 2012. The dip was particularly evident in Florida, the largest and most important of the swing states in terms of electoral college votes.

Rahul Gandhi, Delhi CM detained by Delhi police

AGENCIES
Indian Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi was detained for a second time yesterday by Delhi Police and taken to an undisclosed location after he tried to meet the family members of the ex-serviceman who allegedly committed suicide as high drama unfolded on streets in Lutyens' Delhi with Congress and AAP workers staging protests. Gandhi along with other Congress leaders, including Jyotiraditya Scindia and Ajay Maken were bundled into a police van and taken to the Tilak Marg police station. Earlier in the day, Gandhi was detained at the RML Hospital when he tried to meet the family members of ex-serviceman Ram Kishan Grewal, who allegedly committed suicide last night over the One Rank-One Pension issue, and taken to Mandir Marg police station. He was detained for around 70 minutes before being released. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted that he has been detained by police but has no idea where they are taking him. Earlier, Arvind had tweeted that cops were not letting him go to a police station to meet the family of Ram Kishan Grewal. In a video shot inside Mandir Marg police station, Rahul was seen lashing out at a group of Delhi Police personnel for taking into custody some relatives of Grewal. Grewal, an ex-serviceman from Haryana, ended his life on Tuesday by allegedly consuming poison on the lawns behind a government building in Janpath, the central area of the capital. Grewal who was a familiar face of OROP agitation which demands a balanced pension system for all present and past servicemen, left behind a suicide note, his son said. A family member of Grewal alleged that police manhandled them when the family was in trauma. Hitting back, BJP today accused Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal of doing "politics over deaths" after they targeted Modi government over the suicide.



Saudi prince flogged in prison

AFP, Riyadh
Saudi Arabia has flogged a prince convicted in a criminal case, a newspaper reported yesterday, two weeks after another was executed for murder in rare punishment of the country's royalty. The unnamed prince was lashed along with other convicts in a prison in the Red Sea city of Jeddah on Monday, the Okaz daily reported. It said the prince had been sentenced to flogging and jail without specifying the charges. It was unclear how many lashes he received. Last month, Saudi authorities executed Prince Turki bin Saud al-Kabir in a highly unusual case involving one of the thousands of members of the royal family. He was condemned to death for shooting dead Adel al-Mahemid, a Saudi, during a brawl. Most people put to death in Saudi Arabia are beheaded with a sword. Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most prolific executioners and has a strict Islamic legal code under which murder, drug trafficking, armed robbery, rape and apostasy are all punishable by death. Rights groups have also raised concerns including those handed to Saudi rights activist Raif Badawi, convicted of insulting Islam, and Palestinian poet Ashraf Fayad, convicted of apostasy. Arrested in 2012, Badawi is serving a 10-year jail sentence and has received 50 lashes of a 1,000-lash sentence that caused international outrage. A Saudi court in February commuted a death sentence against Fayad to eight years in jail, but maintained a punishment of 800 lashes in sessions of 50.

PROBE AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA PRESIDENT Report finds 'criminal activity'

AFP, Pretoria
South Africa's anti-corruption watchdog Wednesday called for prosecutors to investigate alleged criminal activity as it released a report into President Jacob Zuma that fuelled further calls for him to resign. Zuma, whose presidency has been engulfed by multiple scandals, had fought to block the release of the Public Protector's report, but his lawyers made a surprise U-turn and dropped their legal appeal. The report was released hours later, further undermining Zuma after a series of court rulings that have tarnished his time in office and the ruling ANC party that led the fight to end apartheid rule. The investigation probed accusations that Zuma allowed the Guptas, a wealthy Indian business family, to have undue influence over government, including letting them choose some cabinet ministers. Among findings in the 355-page report -- titled "State of Capture" and illustrated on its front page with a hand strung with puppet wires -- was telephone evidence that David van Rooyen visited the Johannesburg

neighbourhood where the Guptas live on the day before he was appointed finance minister. The Public Protector said it "brings to the notice of the National Prosecuting Authority... those matters identified in this report where it appears crimes have been committed". It raised several allegations that Zuma had broken the Executive Members' Ethics Act in his relationship with the Guptas and by failing "to select and appoint ministers lawfully". - Protest marches - The report was published as thousands of people took to the streets of the administrative capital Pretoria to demand that Zuma resign. Police fired rubber bullets and water cannon to disperse supporters of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party who tried to storm Zuma's office in the city. The Gupta family -- brothers Ajay, Atul and Rajesh -- built an empire in mining, transportation, technology and media after arriving in South Africa from India in the early 1990s.



Even Republicans slam FBI

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
In a surprise show of comradeship, a number of Republicans have joined Democrats in attacking FBI chief James Comey for revealing his organisation is investigating newly uncovered emails associated with Hillary Clinton's private server just 11 days before the presidential elections. The FBI said it had found thousands of emails, during an unrelated investigation, which may be "pertinent" to its review of Clinton's use of a private server from 2009 to 2013. Comey concluded in July that while Clinton and her staff had been "extremely careless" in handling classified information, there were no grounds for any charges. The announcement sparked intense backlash, with Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook calling the revelation a "blatant double standard" following a CNBC report that Comey opposed releasing details about possible Russian interference in the US election because it was too close to election day. As criticism mounts against the FBI director, even Republicans have denounced the timing of the email revelation and a potential post-election spillover. Ohio Republican congressman Jim

Jordan, who chairs the House Freedom Caucus, told Fox News Radio: "I think this was probably not the right thing for Comey to do - the protocol here - to come out this close to an election, but this whole case has been mishandled, and now it is what it is." In a letter addressed to Comey on Monday, the Iowa Senator and head of the Senate Judiciary Committee Chuck Grassley called for more details about the revelation. "I agree that your disclosure did not go far enough. Unfortunately, your letter failed to give Congress and the American people enough context to evaluate the significance or full meaning of this development," wrote Grassley. "Without additional context, your disclosure is not fair to Congress, the American people, or Secretary Clinton." Newt Gingrich, a Trump campaign surrogate and former House speaker, said on Twitter: "We should not be forced to vote with ten thousand or more emails still hidden by the FBI. John Podesta [chairman of the Clinton

campaign] and Hillary Clinton are right." In an op-ed for the New York Times, chief ethics lawyer in the Bush White House Richard Painter wrote: "I never thought that the FBI could be dragged into a political circus surrounding one of its investigations. Until this week." Joe Walsh, a Trump supporter and former Republican congressman, has posted a series of tweets slamming the timing of Comey's decision. His remarks include: "What he just did 11 days [before] the election is wrong and unfair to Hillary. I want Trump to win, but what Comey just did to Hillary is wrong & really unfair to her." Larry Thompson, a Bush deputy attorney-general, wrote in an op-ed in The Washington Post co-authored with Jamie Gorelick: "We now have ... a kind of reality TV of federal criminal investigation ... it is antithetical to the interests of justice, putting a thumb on the scale of this election and damaging our democracy." Jeanine Pirro, a former GOP prosecutor, judge and Trump supporter, said on Fox News that Comey's actions "disgraces and politicises" the FBI.



US President Barack Obama poses with supporters during a Hillary for America campaign rally in Columbus, Ohio, on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

S Korea names new PM as scandal grows

REUTERS, Seoul
South Korea's presidential office yesterday named a new prime minister and finance minister, the highest-level shake-up since President Park Geun-hye's administration was rocked by a scandal involving a friend accused of meddling in state affairs. But opposition parties denounced the reshuffle as a bid by Park to divert attention from the political crisis, which has dragged her approval rating to an all-time low. The Blue House named Financial Services Commission Chairman Yim Jong-yong as finance minister and deputy prime minister. Yim, who replaces incumbent minister Yoo Il-ho, has been well-regarded by policy-makers and market participants in his current role.



An ultra-Orthodox Jewish woman (R) spits on a woman of the liberal Jewish religious group Women of the Wall, as they try to stop them from entering the women's section of the Western Wall nearby, carrying a Torah scroll, in the Old city of Jerusalem yesterday, during a protest by the group demanding equal prayer rights at the site. PHOTO: AFP

No more homework! Spanish parents go on strike

AFP, Madrid
Children have long complained about homework but parents in Spain are now joining in and have decided to go on strike against their offspring's school load for the whole month of November. Called by the Spanish Alliance of Parents' Associations (CEAPA) the strike targets weekend homework for primary and high school students. According to a 2012 PISA education report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Spain was the fifth nation with the most homework after Russia, Italy, Ireland and Poland out of 38 countries studied, with 6.5 hours a week compared to an average of 4.9. The workload does not necessarily translate in better results for Spanish students, whom the PISA report traditionally gives low scores in maths, reading and science. By contrast, in Finland and South Korea -- two of the countries with best student performances according to PISA -- the average time spent on homework every week was less than three hours.

'MH370 made rapid descent'

AFP, Sydney
Flight MH370 was likely out of control when it plunged into the ocean with its wing flaps not prepared for landing, a new report said yesterday, casting doubt on theories a pilot was still in charge. Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 disappeared en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014 carrying 239 passengers and crew. The report by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau found the plane's final satellite communications were "consistent with the aircraft being in a high and increasing rate of descent" when it vanished. Analysis of the right outboard flap -- which was found off Tanzania -- showed it

was "most likely in the retracted position", suggesting the plane was not configured for landing before it smashed into the ocean. The new findings cast doubt on theories proposed by some analysts that a pilot had been flying the plane when it landed in the sea. "You can draw your own conclusions," the ATSB's head of MH370 search operations Peter Foley told reporters, adding that the new findings showed "we're looking for an aircraft that's actually quite close to the seventh arc."



Mystery of MH370

The search zone -- defined under the "most likely" scenario that no one was at the controls as the jet ran out of fuel -- is a thin, long stretch of water within the so-called seventh arc, where the plane was calculated to have emitted a final satellite "handshake" showing its location.