

# NEWS IN brief

### Landslide smash hotel in China; 12 killed

AFP, Beijing

Rescuers have retrieved the bodies of 12 people killed when a landslide smashed into a hotel in central China, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday. The three-storey Mirage Hotel in Hubei province was slammed by 3,000 cubic metres of debris that poured down a slope behind the building at 7:30 pm Friday, it said.

### 7.9 quake shakes PNG, tsunami alert rescinded

AFP, Sydney

A powerful 7.9-magnitude earthquake struck Papua New Guinea yesterday, shaking homes and sparking a tsunami alert, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage. The tsunami warning for the Pacific island nation and its neighbours was later cancelled. The tremor struck 40 kilometres west of Panguna on Papua New Guinea's Bougainville island at a depth of 153 kilometres at 3:30pm local time.

### Suspected rebels kill 2 soldiers in Assam

AFP, Guwahati

Suspected militants ambushed an army vehicle Sunday and killed two paramilitary troopers in India's restive northeastern state of Assam, police said. The rebels lobbed grenades at the troopers before detonating a small bomb in Tinsukia district, police said. Local media reports said the troopers were escorting tourists back from a festival in the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh when their vehicles came under attack.

### Trump to receive Mexico, UK leaders

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump will welcome British Prime Minister Theresa May on Friday in his first meeting with a foreign leader, the White House said Saturday. White House press secretary Sean Spicer made the announcement at a briefing. Trump will also receive his Mexican counterpart Enrique Pena Nieto on January 31, he added.

### Oops, its China made again!

It's always good to have principles. It's not so good when you get caught out contradicting said principles. Unfortunately, that's already happened to President Donald Trump. On Saturday, he tweeted: "We will follow two simple rules: BUY AMERICAN & HIRE AMERICAN!" But he overlooked one minor detail. Trump's own inauguration hats were made in China. Two of Trump's core policy pledges have been to stand up to China, and bring manufacturing jobs back to the US. So far, so good, then.



### Trump misspells 'honour' in Twitter mishap

He may have become the leader of the free world but moving to the White House does not seem to have helped Donald Trump's spelling. Shortly after his inauguration, the US President tweeted saying he was "honored" to have been sworn in as the 45th US leader. While the British and US spellings of the word "honoured" are different, neither are spelt in the way used by Trump. The former property tycoon wrote: "I am honored to serve you, the great American People, as your 45th President of the United States!" The tweet was quickly deleted and re-posted with the correct spelling, but not before a number of people had replied querying the President's spelling.



(Top) Protesters march during the Women's March on Washington in Washington, DC, on Saturday; people gather for the Women's March in Washington (bottom two pictures). Hundreds of thousands of women filled the streets of major American cities on Saturday to lead an unprecedented wave of international protests against President Donald Trump, mocking and denouncing the new US leader the day after his inauguration. (Story on page 16)

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## Rocky start for Trump

### The US president picks up 'war on media' over inauguration crowd reports

AGENCIES  
Donald Trump's White House came under fire yesterday for falsely accusing media of misreporting inaugural crowd numbers, after millions took to the streets in protest against the new president.

The brash billionaire and his chief spokesman launched a startling assault on the media on Saturday, Trump's first full day in office, accusing reporters of downplaying the turnout at his swearing-in ceremony.

The statements from Trump and his chief spokesman of the inauguration turnout are being seen by analysts as an attempt to change the subject.

Non-stop news network coverage of Saturday's sprawling demonstrations against Trump were replaced within hours by debate over his "war on the media," which is likely to play well among his supporters.

Neither man has produced evidence to back their claims. And photographs appear to show many more attending the inauguration of Barack Obama in 2009.

Trump did not mention the protests during a bridge-building visit to CIA

headquarters in Langley, Virginia, on Saturday but instead turned on the press. He accused the media of inventing a feud between him and the intelligence community. Trump said TV footage and photos of his inauguration had painted an inaccurate picture. "It looked like a million and a half peo-

#### DEVELOPMENTS

Women lead mass protests worldwide against the new US president

Trump visits CIA HQ, says 'I am with you 1,000 percent'

Former CIA chief slams Trump's 'despicable' ego

ple" there on Friday, he said, disputing media reports that there were as few as 250,000 people.

"As you know, I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on Earth," Trump said.

Later, White House press secretary Sean Spicer also went on the attack.

"There's been a lot of talk in the media about the responsibility to hold Donald Trump accountable, and I'm here to tell you it goes two ways. We're going to hold the press accountable as well."

He refused to take questions. Trump's visit to the CIA headquarters had sought to mend relations with the intelligence community after weeks of doubting their conclusions about alleged Russian interference into the US election.

"I love you, I respect you," he said, adding that he was "1,000%" behind the spy agency. Trump said the media had invented a feud between them, although in a recent row over a leaked dossier that alleged the Kremlin held compromising material on him, he had likened the actions of intelligence agencies to Nazi Germany.

But the outgoing CIA director condemned the president's statement at Langley. "Former CIA Director Brennan is deeply saddened and angered at Donald Trump's despicable display of self-aggrandisement in front of CIA's Memorial Wall of agency heroes," his former deputy, Nick Shapiro, said in a statement carried by CNN.

## Pope warns against 'saviours' like Hitler

AFP, Madrid

Pope Francis on Saturday warned against populism, saying it could lead to the election of "saviours" like Hitler.

In an hour-long interview with Spanish newspaper El Pais conducted as Donald Trump was being sworn in as US president, the pontiff also condemned the idea of using walls and barbed wire to keep out foreigners.

"Of course crises provoke fears and worries," he said but added that for him "the example of populism in the European sense of the word is Germany in 1933."

"Germany... was looking for a leader, someone who would give her back her identity and there was a little man named Adolf Hitler who said 'I can do it'."

"Hitler did not steal power," the pope said. "He was elected by his people and then he destroyed his people."

The Germans at that time also wanted to protect themselves with "walls and barbed wire so that others cannot take away their identity," he said.

"The case of Germany is classic," he said, adding that Hitler gave them a "deformed identity and we know what it produced."

Pope Francis however underscored that it was too early to pass judgement on Trump.

"Let's see. Let's see what he does and then we will evaluate," he said.

## Trump fires all foreign US ambassadors

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Shortly after Donald Trump was sworn into office as the 45th President of the United States, all foreign ambassadors were fired and with no concrete replacement ambassadors lined up.

Trump had demanded that every ambassador in countries all over the world, who had been appointed by former President Barack Obama, were told to leave their offices by midday on 20 January and with no grace period.

His transition team had said on 23 December there would be "no exceptions" for ambassadors requesting to extend their postings past Inauguration day, in contrast with other presidents, even for ambassadors with young children.

It is common policy, however, that politically appointed ambassadors resign at the start of a new administration. It is less common to have no replacements in line.

As many as 80 ambassadors for countries, agencies and issues - such as the ambassador for global women's issues - have been discarded at once.

The move now threatens leaving many countries without Senate-confirmed envoys for months and cutting off a direct line to the president, and some in countries which have sensitive relations to the US.

This includes Germany, the UK and Canada, as well as other critical allies. Also, countries such as China, India, Japan and Saudi Arabia will also be looking for replacements.

The process of replacing politically-appointed ambassadors is a lengthy one carried out by Congress.

Few appointments have been made so far. South Carolina governor Nikki Haley is ambassador to the United Nations, replacing Samantha Power.

Bankruptcy lawyer David Friedman is ambassador to Israel and Iowa Gov Terry Branstad is ambassador to China.

## Yahya Jammeh leaves power, flees Gambia

AFP, Banjul

Gambian leader Yahya Jammeh flew out Saturday from the country he ruled for 22 years to cede power to President Adama Barrow and end a political crisis.

Jammeh refused to step down after a December 1 election in which Barrow was declared the winner, triggering weeks of uncertainty that almost ended in a military intervention involving five other west African nations.

The longtime leader, wearing his habitual white flowing robes, waved to supporters before boarding a small, unmarked plane at Banjul airport alongside Guinea's President Alpha Conde after two days of talks over a departure deal.

He landed in Conakry, Guinea's capital but set off again for Equatorial Guinea, where he will remain in exile, the president of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), Marcel Alain de Souza, said at a Dakar press conference.

Jammeh finally said he would step aside in the early hours of Saturday morning and hand power to Barrow, who has been in neighbouring Senegal but is expected back in The Gambia imminently.

Scenes of jubilation broke out almost immediately on streets near Banjul, the port capital, after the news filtered out that Jammeh had gone.

The Gambia is one of the world's poorest nations and although education and health standards have lifted in recent years, poverty remains endemic.



Fire is seen along a road in the town of Hualane during a big forest fire, on the outskirts of the Curico city, south of Chile, on Saturday. Authorities declared a state of catastrophe in central Chile as crews fought vast forest fires described as the worst in decades. More than 450 square kilometers were ablaze in the O'Higgins region -- an area roughly the size of Vienna or Tel Aviv. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Israel approves permits for 566 settler homes

AGENCIES

Israeli authorities have approved building permits for 566 settler homes in occupied East Jerusalem, according to local officials, a move that has drawn condemnation from Palestinian leaders.

The approval of the building plan on Sunday came two days after the inauguration of Donald Trump in the United States, with Israeli official saying the permits had been held up until the end of Barack Obama's administration, which had been critical of Israeli settlement activity.

"The rules of the game have changed with Donald Trump's arrival as president," Meir Turgeman, Jerusalem's deputy mayor, told AFP news agency.

"We no longer have our hands tied as in the time of Barack Obama. Now we can finally build."

Turgeman said that city officials approved the plans that had been previously postponed at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request following a UN Security Council resolution in December against Israeli settlement building.

The new permits are for homes in the settlement neighbourhoods of Pisgat Zeev, Ramot and Ramat Shlomo, according to Turgeman, who also heads the planning committee that approved them.

Turgeman said plans for about 11,000 other homes were also in process in East Jerusalem, though he did not say when they could proceed.

Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are considered illegal under international law and have been major stumbling blocks in negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis.



### SYRIA WAR

## Rebels arrive for talks with regime

AFP, Astana

Members of the Syrian opposition delegation yesterday arrived in the Kazakh capital Astana for face-to-face peace talks with the war-torn nation's government.

The talks, set to begin today, will be the first time a delegation composed exclusively of rebel groups will negotiate with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Rebels have insisted the talks will focus solely on reinforcing a frail nationwide truce brokered by opposition supporter Turkey and regime ally Russia last month.

## World headed for turbulent times with Trump at helm

Warns German FM; Hollande warns against protectionism

AGENCIES

Germany's foreign minister yesterday predicted turbulent times ahead for the world following Donald Trump's accession to power in the United States.

"With the election of Donald Trump, the world of the 20th century has definitely been overtaken," Frank-Walter Steinmeier wrote in a commentary published in the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

Steinmeier, 60, has emerged in recent months as the German government's most strident detractor of Trump.

In his article, Steinmeier warned that the world was headed "for turbulent times."

"In these times of fresh global disorder this will go further...there is a lot at stake."

But Steinmeier said he would seek dialogue with the Trump administration and outline "our position, our values and our interests."

Meanwhile, French President Francois Hollande warned Saturday that protectionism is "the worst response," in a seeming allusion to the "America First" policies of new US president.

Hollande made the comment on the first day of a Latin American tour that is taking him to Chile and Colombia -- one of his last foreign trips before stepping down after April-May elections choose his successor.

"We are utterly opposed to protectionism. We favor regulated globalization so that there are health standards, social standards... in the exchanges between countries, between regions," the French leader said in a joint news conference with Chilean counterpart Michelle Bachelet.

Protectionism, he said, "prevents trade, damages growth and affects employment, including in countries that forge protectionism and especially erect it."

Although he did not mention any countries specifically, the message appeared to be directed at the United States, where Trump has vowed to establish a "buy American, hire American" national policy.