

NEWS IN brief

Palestinian shot dead by Israeli settler

AFP, Nablus
An Israeli settler shot dead a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank yesterday after a group of Israelis was targeted by Palestinian stone-throwers, officials said. The Palestinian health ministry confirmed the Palestinian was killed after being shot by an Israeli settler.

India, Singapore ink naval pact

TNN, New Delhi
India and Singapore on Wednesday inked a naval pact to majorly crank up their maritime security cooperation with access to each other's bases, while reiterating the need expansionist behaviour in the Asia Pacific region. The two countries also decided to renew the bilateral army pact.

Venezuela's Maduro to seek 2nd term in 2018

AFP, Caracas
Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro will seek re-election next year, Vice President Tarek El Aissami said Wednesday. Next year's presidential election in the South American country -- a member of OPEC -- is scheduled for December, but some experts believe it could be brought forward to March.

Over 200 terrorists killed in J&K in 2017

PTI, Srinagar
For the first time in seven years, the number of terrorists killed in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir has crossed 200, according to the state police. The DGP's tweet came on a day five terrorists were killed in two separate encounters by the security forces in Kashmir's Budgam and Baramulla districts.



An activist pours gasoline as an effigy of President Rodrigo Duterte and US President Donald Trump burns during a protest action against Duterte's plan to set up a Revolutionary Government, along a street in metro Manila, Philippines yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

ROHINGYA TERROR TIES

India says no link emerged so far

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi
India's Border Security Force has said that it has so far not found anything to link Rohingyas apprehended in India with terror groups. Sharma, BSF Director General, said BSF has apprehended 87 Rohingya refugees this year until October 31 and sent 76 of them back to Bangladesh. He said BSF personnel have interrogated many Rohingyas but had not found anything related to terrorism. "In our assessment, no link of Rohingya refugees with terror activities or groups has emerged.... We have not found any arms or ammunition on Rohingya (refugees) apprehended by us.... But intelligence agencies have given such inputs. I have no reason to doubt them," Sharma said at the annual media conference ahead of the BSF Raising Day on Wednesday. His remarks come after the Indian Home Ministry had submitted before the Supreme Court in September that the continued presence of an estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees posed a national security threat. The apex court is hearing a petition filed by two Rohingya refugees opposing Indian government's move to deport them. Sharma said it is BSF's job to stop illegal immigration, whether from Bangladesh or anywhere else. "As per my information, there are 9-10 lakh Rohingyas (people) in Bangladesh. We know some of it will spill over. We have increased vigil on the border. We are apprehending Rohingya (refugees) and pushing them back -- we don't want to arrest them as that creates a liability here," the BSF DG said.

GAZA HANDOVER UNDER PALESTINIAN UNITY DEAL

Delay raises fresh doubts

AFP, Gaza City
Palestinian rival factions have delayed the handover of power in the Gaza Strip by at least 10 days, stoking fears yesterday that a landmark deal to end their decade-long feud may be set to fail. Fatah and Hamas announced the delay late Wednesday after sharp disagreements derailed a plan to return civil power in the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority (PA) by today. The handover would end Islamist movement Hamas's 10-year dominance of the blockaded Palestinian enclave and had raised hopes that deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the territory could be addressed. Gaza has seen three wars with Israel since 2008. A range of complex issues remain to be resolved, including security control of the Gaza Strip and the fate of two separate civil administrations. Previous attempts at reconciliation between Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah movement, based in the occupied West Bank, and his Islamist rivals from Hamas have previously failed. The two factions have not publicly presented a plan for how they will resolve remaining issues before the new December 10 deadline under the Egyptian-brokered accord. Ghassan Khatib, a former Palestinian Authority minister, said he doubted a true handover could occur by the target

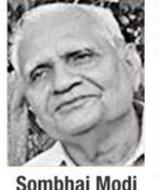
date, though partial progress may allow the factions to keep the accord alive. "This decision (to delay) was taken under pressure from the Egyptian delegation," he said. "The Egyptian delegation wants success, so they suggested 10 days and promised to continue their presence there and to put pressure on the two sides. I personally doubt that they can solve all those issues quickly." Wednesday's late-night announcement followed a day of turbulence related to the reconciliation deal signed in Cairo on October 12. Fatah's top negotiator, Azzam al-Ahmad, told AFP on Wednesday that Hamas was "not committed to the agreement it signed in Cairo." "Until this moment, the problems and obstacles from Hamas are still there and are increasing." In response, senior Hamas official Bassem Naim accused Fatah of "manoeuvres" to avoid going through with the deal. Hamas also accuses Abbas of violating the spirit of the agreement by so far refusing to lift punitive measures, including a cut in electricity payments for Gaza. Also on Wednesday, PA employees were prevented by union delegates close to Hamas from returning to work at a number of ministries in the Gaza Strip. Fatah and Hamas traded accusations over the incident.

**Hamas, Fatah extend reconciliation timetable
PA to have full control in Gaza on Dec 10**

Family remains untouched by PM Narendra Modi's rise

TNN, Vadnagar
Around mid-day, 75-year-old Sombhai Modi blows the conch shell at the newly-constructed Sirdi Sai temple in an old age home run by the Sarvodaya Sewa Trust headed by him. The compound recently acquired gates but there is nothing to detract from the relative obscurity and ordinariness that marks the 'aarti' and other rituals that are part of the daily routine at the ashram. Sombhai's younger brother Narendra Modi's rise+ to the prime ministership has not changed things at the Vadnagar ashram where Sombhai has lived since the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. Modi became chief minister later that year, launching him on a journey that took him to the PM's post, but Sombhai's life remains unchanged as he tends to the elderly and organises blood donation and healthcare camps. Unlike the more common trend of relatives gaining in affluence and influence, Sombhai objects to being called the "prime minister's brother" and feels comfortable with the lack of attention. Despite repeated requests, Sombhai refuses an interview,

saying, "It kills the purpose of not using the position of my younger brother." Sombhai is not an exception. Modi's first cousin Ashokbhai cooks meals at a sevashram in Vadnagar. Ashokbhai cooks 'khichdi' and his wife Vimlaben Modi washes utensils. The couple earns Rs 4,000-5,000 a month to take care of three daughters and a son. Modi's younger sister Vasantiben and her husband Hansmukhbhai Modi, who retired from LIC, live in a row house at Vishnagar, some 90 km from Ahmedabad. Modi's youngest brother Pankajbhai, an officer with the state information department, is the most well known, thanks to mother Heeraben staying with him in his three-room house in Ahmedabad. Modi visits on occasions, including his birthday to take his mother's blessings. Another older brother, Amrutbhai, retired from a private company as a fitter in 2005. He settled in Chatlodia Colony in Ahmedabad. His family's austerity has helped Modi avoid being tagged for nepotism though some family members rue that the PM should attend a family dinner. That does not seem very likely though.



Sombhai Modi



A man holds his daughter before Mount Agung in Karangasem on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. Thousands of foreign tourists were leaving Bali by plane following a nearly three-day airport shutdown sparked by the rumbling volcano on the Indonesian holiday island. PHOTO: AFP

FOREIGN EXCHANGE SCANDAL IN MALAYSIA

Panel urges probe of Mahathir

AFP, Kuala Lumpur
An inquiry into huge losses by Malaysia's central bank yesterday recommended Mahathir Mohamad face a criminal investigation, ahead of polls at which the former premier wants to oust the current government. The final report by the official Royal Commission of Inquiry into the scandal in the 1990s during Mahathir's tenure also recommended Anwar Ibrahim -- finance minister at the time and now a leading opposition figure languishing in jail -- face a criminal probe. Mahathir, who led Malaysia for 22 years and has come out of retirement to take on scandal-hit Prime Minister Najib Razak, previously denounced the investigation into multi-billion-dollar foreign exchange losses as a "vindictive" attempt to target him and deflect attention from the government's problems. Najib is battling allegations that billions of dollars were looted from crisis-hit sovereign wealth fund 1MDB. Najib and the fund deny any

wrongdoing. He must call elections by August and political tensions are rising. Mahathir has emerged as a potent danger after joining up with a fractured opposition coalition that includes Anwar, his one-time foe and a charismatic political veteran imprisoned following a controversial 2015 sodomy conviction. The report from the probe into the scandal at Bank Negara Malaysia found that 31.5 billion ringgit (about \$8 billion) was lost through foreign exchange trading between 1992 and '94. "There is evidence from documents

and testimonies of witnesses to prove that (the central bank) had undertaken voluminous speculative trading activities for profit," said the inquiry's report, according to state-run news agency Bernama. It recommended criminal investigations over alleged breach of trust and cheating by Mahathir and Anwar for allegedly withholding information about the true level of the losses from the Cabinet. Mahathir, who retired as premier in 2003, had denied having interfered in the central bank's operations in testimony to the inquiry in September. The report also recommended that officers from the central bank, the finance ministry and the auditor general's department at the time of the scandal be placed under formal investigation. After its release, the secretary of the commission of inquiry, Yusof Ismail, lodged a police report and said that police in the capital Kuala Lumpur would investigate the allegations, Bernama reported.



GULF SUMMIT Kuwait invites boycott-hit Qatar

AFP, Dubai
Kuwait yesterday invited Qatar to a summit of Gulf countries next week, state media said, the first such invitation in a months-long Saudi-led diplomatic boycott of Doha. Kuwait, which is not among Arab states boycotting Qatar, invited Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to the Gulf Cooperation Council summit on December 5 and 6, the state-run KUNA news agency said. In June, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt abruptly cut all ties with Qatar over accusations Doha supported extremism and was close to Shia Iran. Qatar denies the allegations.

BOSE'S DEATH MYSTERY

File 'closed for 100 yrs'

TNN, Chennai
A request made by Paris-based historian JBP More for access to a secret file of the French military authorities, which may unravel the mystery behind the death of Subhas Chandra Bose, was refused by the French national archival authorities recently. They said the file was closed for 100 years. "After years of research, I can confirm that Bose's life ended in Saigon, most probably at Vietnam's Bot Cinat prison, on the basis of the French secret service records," he said. "The letter of the French authorities not to allow me to consult a lone file pertaining to the INA and Bose in Saigon has come as a great surprise to me. This goes to affirm my conviction that Bose's life ended in Saigon sometime in September 1945. That is why this file has been classified as out of reach for consultation for 100 years," said More, who teaches at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Economiques et Commerciales, Paris. More said it is now up to the concerned

people or the Indian authorities to demand the French to open up this lone file that is withheld from the public for 100 years. "This file must contain information about the last days of Bose," said More. In July, based on a French secret service report dated December 11, 1947 at the National Archives of France, More had come up with a finding that Bose didn't die in an air crash. "It seems quite certain that Bose did not die in the air crash off Taipei as popularly believed. If he had died there, then Bose's ashes kept in Tokyo needs to undergo DNA test to confirm that it was really Bose who had died in the air crash. Since this test was never done, one could reasonably hold that the ashes did not belong to Bose," he said. Besides, other stories had been planted on and off that Bose escaped to Russia or China. According to More, these stories have been floated by vested interests to cover up the fact that Bose was arrested in Saigon after 17th August 1945.



UN brings Syria peace talks under one roof

REUTERS, Geneva
Negotiators for Syria's combatants arrived at a UN complex for peace talks yesterday amid expectations the rival teams will be encouraged to hold face-to-face discussions, in what would be a small breakthrough in efforts to end the six-year-old war. One diplomat said UN mediator Staffan de Mistura was expected to try to bring the two sides together, but it was not clear whether he would succeed. Previous rounds of talks have gone almost nowhere, with de Mistura shuttling between hotels and meeting different groups separately. But for the first time Syria's opposition has sent a unified delegation, raising the possibility of direct talks across one table.

EU, UN and African leaders draw up emergency plan

AFP, Abidjan
A summit gathering European and African leaders from more than 80 countries yesterday drew to a close with plans for the immediate evacuation of some 3,800 African migrants stranded in Libya. Wrapping up the summit in the Ivory Coast capital, a top African Union official said there could be as many as 700,000 Africans trapped in Libya, where many have suffered atrocities and even been sold into slavery. The two-day summit of the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) was showcased as a project to boost development in Africa as it faces a population crunch. But it was largely overshadowed by shock TV footage of black Africans sold as slaves in Libya, prompting protests in many countries and demands for action. In a final address, AU commission chief

Moussa Faki Mahamat said those stranded in Libya wanted to get out "as swiftly as possible," warning that there were between "400,000 and 700,000" people there and at least 42 migrant camps. "We must urgently save those who are in this (dire) situation, and then together, Libya, the EU, AU and UN, we must think about devising longer-term solutions for the migration issue." Hosting the summit, Ivorian President Alassan Outara agreed there was an urgent need for action. "The inhumane treatment of migrants challenges us, requiring responses which match our condemnation," he said. He called on humanitarian aid to go hand-in-hand with action to root out human trafficking, and solutions for the poverty that prompted so many young Africans to take the risk of trekking to Europe in search of a better life.

MIGRANT 'SLAVE MARKET' IN LIBYA

