

NEWS IN
brief

Armenia detains anti-govt protest leader

AFP, Yerevan
Armenia yesterday detained anti-government protest leader Nikol Pashinyan, prosecutors said, shortly after Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan stormed out of talks with him on the tenth day of mass rallies against his rule. Protesters accuse Sargsyan of clinging to power after he was appointed premier this month following 10 years as president.

'World's oldest woman dies in Japan at 117

AFP, Tokyo
A 117-year-old Japanese woman, thought to be the world's oldest person, has died, a local official told AFP yesterday. Nabi Tajima, who was born August 4, 1900, died around 8:00pm Saturday at a hospital on her native Kikai Island in Kagoshima region. The oldest man in the world is 112-year-old Masazo Nonaka of Japan.

Funeral held for Barbara Bush

AFP, Houston
Past presidents, family and friends came together Saturday to bid a tearful farewell to Barbara Bush, the matriarch of one of America's most prominent political dynasties, at her funeral in Texas. Bush, who died Tuesday aged 92, was wife to the 41st US president and mother to the 43rd. She was remembered for her friendship, her wit and her strength.

Suicide bombers kill 3 in Nigeria mosque

AFP, Kano
Two suicide bombers killed three Muslim worshippers in a mosque in a northeast Nigerian town. The bombers, a man and a woman, detonated their explosives inside the mosque during morning prayers on Saturday in the town of Bama in Borno state.



Wounded Afghan child Zahra, 8, is treated following a suicide bombing attack at the Isteqlal Hospital in Kabul on April 22, 2018. Inset, Relatives of victims mourn at hospital. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: AFP

TESTIMONY ON REUTERS JOURNO CASE

Myanmar cop's family evicted

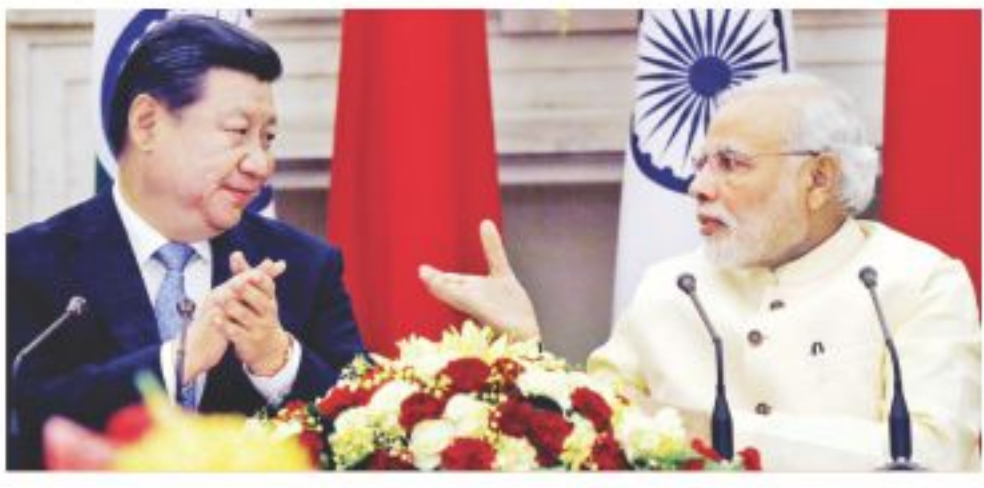
AFP, Yangon
The family of a Myanmar policeman who testified in court that two Reuters reporters had been set up was evicted from their police housing a day after his evidence, his wife said.
Deputy police Major Moe Yan Naing, a prosecution witness, surprised the Yangon courtroom on Friday by describing how his colleagues were ordered by a senior officer to "get" reporter Wa Lone by handing him sensitive documents at a meeting.
The 32-year-old Myanmar journalist and his colleague Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, have been detained since they were arrested in December and accused of possessing classified papers.
The case, which has sparked global alarm over eroding press freedom in Myanmar, could see the pair jailed for up to 14 years.
Moe Yan Naing's testimony was an extremely rare case of a security official breaking ranks in the former junta-run country, where the army remains immensely powerful.
The defence team quickly expressed fears for the safety of the policeman, who was returned to detention after the pre-trial hearing. He has also been held by authorities since December and is facing charges for breaching police regulations.
Officials have sought to curtail reporting on a military crackdown in Rakhine state which the UN says amounts to ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Rohingya minority. At the time of their arrests the reporters had been investigating security officers' roles in the massacre of 10 Rohingya men in northern Rakhine, centre of the army campaign that has seen some 700,000 Rohingya flee to neighbouring Bangladesh since August.
The military later conceded that security officers took part in the killings, which rights groups say is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to atrocities against the Rohingya.
The stateless group has faced decades of systematic discrimination and persecution in mainly Buddhist Myanmar.

INDO-SINO RAPPROCHEMENT DRIVE

Modi to meet Xi this week

REUTERS, Beijing
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit China later this week for an informal meeting with President Xi Jinping, as efforts at rapprochement gather pace following a testing year in ties between the two giant neighbours.
The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, said the two will meet on Friday and Saturday in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. Wang was speaking after meeting Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in Beijing.
"This year, under the guidance of our leaders, the China-India relationship has realised good development and shown a positive momentum," Wang said.
Modi has sought to re-set ties after disputes over issues including their disputed border with Tibet and other issues. The Asian giants were locked in a 73-day military stand-off in a remote, high-altitude stretch of that boundary last year. At one point, soldiers from the two sides threw stones and punches.
The confrontation between the nuclear-armed powers in the Himalayas underscored Indian alarm at China's expanding security and economic links in South Asia.
China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative of transport and energy links bypasses India, apart from a corner of the

disputed Kashmir region, also claimed by Pakistan, but involves India's neighbours Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives.
Modi's previously unannounced Wuhan trip is even more unusual in that he will visit China again in June for a summit of the China and Russia-led security grouping, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which India joined last year.
It is almost unheard for foreign leaders to visit China twice in such close succession.
Modi's nationalist government has reversed course on its relationship with Beijing apparently after realising its hard line on China was not working.
Exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who lives in India and who China considers a dangerous separatist, is also facing the cold shoulder.
In March, India issued an unprecedented ban on Tibetans holding a rally with the Dalai Lama in New Delhi to mark the 60th anniversary of the start of the failed uprising against Chinese rule.
Other areas of disagreement remain however between Beijing and New Delhi.
China has blocked India's membership of a nuclear cartel and it has also been blocking UN sanctions against a Pakistan-based militant leader blamed for attacks on India.



India to have sexual offenders' data base to monitor crimes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi
For the first time, India will have a sexual offenders' database to monitor and track those convicted of such crimes, joining eight countries which have such information including personal details and DNA of offenders.
The government's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will maintain the database of profiles of sexual offenders and the data will be regularly shared with Indian states for tracking, monitoring and investigation, including verification of antecedents by police.
The decision to create the database was approved at a meeting of the Indian cabinet on Saturday when an ordinance was approved for amending laws to award death sentence to child rapists.
While such a database of sex offenders in the US is public, in the other countries like Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Britain such data of convicted sex offenders

is meant only for use of law enforcement authorities.
It is not clear if the Indian database will be made public or not.
However, the decision may spark controversies as many rights groups such as the Human Right Watch have spoken out against the sex offenders registry, claiming that it negates the concept of rehabilitation and perpetuates social stigma.
"Once such a registry comes into being, I am concerned that it might lead to people not reporting rapes or sexual offences because most of them are by people known to the victims. Also, once you are on the registry, it will mean no jobs, no chance to rehabilitate. Across the world, such registries have failed to act as a deterrent," said Bharti Ali of HAQ Centre for Child Rights.
India is witnessing an outrage over rape incidents of minors.
Facing the outrage, India on Saturday approved death penalty for rapists of minors.



KILLING OF PALESTINIAN IN MALAYSIA

Israel denies Mossad's role in rocket expert's murder

AFP, Jerusalem
Israel's defence minister yesterday said a Palestinian scientist shot dead in Malaysia was a rocket expert and "no saint", but dismissed suggestions by Hamas that Israel's Mossad spy agency assassinated him.
Two men on a motorcycle fired 10 shots at Fadi al-Batsh, an engineering lecturer, in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, killing him on the spot, the city's police chief, Mazlan Lazim said.
Hamas, an Islamist militant group that rules the Gaza Strip, said one of its members had been assassinated in Malaysia. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said Mossad had been behind past attempts to kill Palestinian scientists, and the attack on Batsh "follows this sequence."
Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said it was likely that Batsh was killed as part of an internal

Palestinian dispute.
"The man was no saint and he didn't deal with improving infrastructure in Gaza - he was involved in improving rockets' accuracy."
Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said on Saturday the suspects in the killing, who fled the scene, were believed to be Europeans with links to a foreign intelligence agency, state news agency Bernama reported.
Batsh could have been seen as "a liability for a country that is an enemy of Palestine," Zahid was quoted as saying by Bernama.
Batsh was a lecturer at Universiti Kuala Lumpur, specialising in power engineering, according to the university.
Batsh's uncle Jamal al-Batsh, speaking to Reuters in the Gaza Strip, said he believed Mossad was behind the killing because "Israel knows Palestine will be liberated by scientists".



Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel (L) and his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro (R) review the guard of honour at the Revolution Palace in Havana on Saturday. Maduro arrived in Havana to ratify his struggling nation's ties with one of its few remaining allies.

'Long way' to go on N Korea crisis: Trump

REUTERS, Washington
US President Donald Trump said the North Korean nuclear crisis is a long way from being resolved on Sunday, striking a cautious note a day after the North's pledge to end its nuclear tests raised hopes before planned summits with South Korea and the United States.
"We are a long way from conclusion on North Korea maybe things will work out and maybe they won't - only time will tell," Trump said on Twitter.
North Korea said on Saturday it was suspending nuclear and missile tests and scrapping its nuclear test site, and instead pursuing economic growth and peace.
The announcement came before the first North Korea-South Korea summit in more than a decade on Friday.
In a tweet minutes before



'Toy drone' near Saudi palaces causes panic

REUTERS, Riyadh
Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry yesterday instructed drone enthusiasts to obtain permission to fly the devices until regulations were finalised, a day after security forces shot down a recreational drone near the king's palace in Riyadh.
Amateur online videos of heavy gunfire in the capital's Khozama district on Saturday sparked fears of possible political unrest in the world's top oil exporter. A senior Saudi official told Reuters there were no casualties when the drone was shot down and that King Salman was not in the palace at the time.
An Interior Ministry spokesman said a law for the use of drones was in its final stage, state news agency SPA reported.
Saudi Arabia has witnessed a series of radical political changes over the past year under the king's son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has spearheaded reforms to transform the economy and open the country culturally.
But they have also fuelled speculation about a possible backlash against the crown prince, who remains popular with Saudi Arabia's burgeoning youth population.

Gunfight in India kills 14 Maoist

AFP, New Delhi
At least 14 suspected Maoist guerrillas were killed yesterday in a gunfight in India's western state of Maharashtra, police said, yet another violent clash in the country's longest-running conflict.
Police said nearly 100 rebels were intercepted in a remote forest in Gadchiroli district roughly 900 kilometres east of Mumbai, and ordered to surrender.
But the guerrillas opened fire, sparking a battle with special police units that lasted hours, Maharashtra police said.
The Maoist insurgency began in the 1960s, inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, and has cost thousands of lives in almost daily incidents of violence.

Trying to appease Trump futile

Iran hardens rhetoric, threatens to 'vigorously' resume enrichment of uranium if US leaves 2015 nuclear deal
AFP, New York
Iran warned Saturday it is ready to "vigorously" resume nuclear enrichment if the United States ditches the 2015 nuclear deal, and said further "drastic measures" are being considered in response to a US exit.
Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in New York that Iran is not seeking to acquire a nuclear bomb, but that its "probable" response to a US withdrawal would be to restart production of enriched uranium -- a key bomb-making ingredient.
"America never should have feared Iran producing a nuclear bomb, but we will pursue vigorously our nuclear enrichment," added Zarif, who is in the United States to attend a UN meeting on sustaining peace.
US President Donald Trump has set a May 12 deadline for the Europeans to "fix" the 2015 agreement that provides for curbs to Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from financial sanctions.
Zarif's comments marked a further hardening of rhetoric following a warning earlier this month from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani that Washington would "regret" withdrawing from the nuclear deal, and that Iran would respond within a week if it did.
The fate of the Iran deal will be a key issue during French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit to Washington beginning today, followed by talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Washington on Friday.
The foreign minister also warned against offering any concessions to Trump.
"To try to appease the president, I think, would be an exercise in futility," he said.
European leaders are hoping to persuade Trump to save the deal if they, in turn, agree to press Iran to enter into agreement on missile tests and moderating its regional influence in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.
Despite the threats of a tough response to a US pull-out, Zarif also left open the possibility of diplomatic action during a 45-day period to formally notify the withdrawal.
"Whether other things can be done during those 45 days ... is a hypothetical question that needs to be addressed at that time," said Zarif.

