

Plane crash: Brazil mourns victims; black box found



Belgian Queen Mathilde and Dutch Queen Maxima (R) disembark from a train at Utrecht central station during an official state visit to the Netherlands —REUTERS

LA UNION (COLOMBIA), NOV 30 /- A plane that crashed in the mountains of Colombia, killing 71 people, including members of a Brazilian football team, may have run out of fuel, a Colombian military source said. "It is very suspicious that despite the impact there was no explosion. That reinforces the theory of the lack of fuel," the source said yesterday.

Six people miraculously survived the crash Monday night, but the disaster virtually wiped out an up-and-coming Brazilian football team and sent shock waves through the world of football. Football legends Pele and Maradona as well as current superstars Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo led tributes to the players of Chapecoense, Real, a humble team whose march

to glory was cut abruptly short. Having risen only recently from obscurity, the team was on its way to play in the finals of the Copa Sudamericana, South America's second-biggest club tournament, when disaster struck. "The pain is terrible. Just as we had made it, I will not say to the pot, but to have national prominence, a tragedy like this happens," club vice-president Ivan Tozzo told Globo Sport TV. "It is very difficult, a very great tragedy."

The charter plane reported "electrical failures" around 10:00 pm Monday (0300 GMT Tuesday) and crashed soon after near the city of Medellin, its destination, officials said. The plane's black box recordings have been found, but there was no word on how long it would take to analyze

them. The dead included most of the team and 20 Brazilian journalists traveling to cover the match. The six survivors are being treated in hospital, officials said. "I have just seen the plane and given the state it is in, it is a miracle that six people survived," said Governor Luis Perez of Antioquia department, where the plane went down. One survivor, goalkeeper Jackson Follmann, had to have his right leg amputated, said the San Vicente Foundation Hospital outside Medellin. It reported he was "stabilizing" in intensive care.

Colombia's civil aviation authority initially said 75 people were killed. But it later emerged that four people on the passenger manifest had not boarded the plane — a club official, a journalist, the

mayor of the team's hometown and the speaker of the state assembly.

"It's one of those things in life. One of those things I'd end up staying behind," said Luciano Bulgoin, the mayor of Chapeco in southern Brazil. Crying, Phlino Filho, the head of the club's advisory council, recalled the players telling him they were off to "chase a dream" as they left. "The group was like a family. It was a group of friends, where everyone laughed a lot, even in defeat," he said.

Meanwhile, emergency workers have found the black boxes with flight data and cockpit voice recordings from a plane that crashed in the Colombian mountains with a Brazilian football team on board, officials have said.(AFP)

Vietnam grants amnesty to over 4,000 prisoners

HANOI, NOV 30 /- Vietnam has granted amnesty to more than 4,000 prisoners, including one sentenced to five years in jail for a national security-related crime. Giang Son, deputy chairman of the President's Office, told reporters at a joint press conference Wednesday that 4,384 inmates were granted amnesty under two directives signed by President Tran Dai Quang. "The amnesty once again reflects the policy of leniency of our party and State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the humane tradition of our nation," Son said.

They will be released from their prisons starting Thursday. One of the prisoners is Bui Xuan Kim who was jailed for national security-related crime, according to Senior Lt. Police General Nguyen Van Thien. Kim has served the rest of his sentence for organizing people to flee to neighboring Cambodia. International human rights groups, the US government and some other Western governments have urged Vietnamese government to release all prisoners of conscience jailed for peacefully expressing their views, but Hanoi says only those who broke the law are locked up. Fourteen foreigners will also be released, according to Vice Foreign Minister Ha Kim Ngoc. They include five from China, three from Laos, one each from South Korea and Australia. (Agencies)

12 killed as fire rips through Turkey school dorm

ISTANBUL, NOV 30 /- Twelve people, most of them schoolgirls, were killed when fire ravaged a dormitory for pupils in the southern Turkish region of Adana, local officials said. The fire, which officials said was likely caused yesterday by an electrical fault, raced through the school building's wooden interior as panicked victims tried to jump from windows to safety. Officials expressed concern that many of the dead were killed after they were unable to open a closed fire door to escape the top floors of the building.

Images showed scenes of devastation as emergency services arrived to tackle the fire at the dormitory building, parts of which were turned into a blazing wreck and whose roof collapsed. "We lost 12 of our citizens in the fire. Eleven were school children and one was a tutor. 22 citizens are injured," Adana region governor Mahmut Demirtas told Turkish NTV television. "According to initial findings, we believe the fire was caused by electrical fault," he said. The Doga news agency specified that

all 11 of the schoolchildren killed were girls. Their identities have yet to be disclosed but they were also said to be 14 or under. The disaster took place in the town of Aladin north of Adana city, one of the biggest urban centres in the south of Turkey. Television footage showed the three-storey building in flames, with fire engine teams trying to put out the blaze.

Demirtas said some terrified schoolgirls were injured after jumping out of the window to escape the flames. He added that none of the injuries were serious condition. The governor said the fire at the private schoolchildren dorm broke out at around 19:25 (1625 GMT) and it was brought under control some three hours later. Demirtas declined to comment on claims that fire escape stairs were locked and students were unable to use them. But Adana city Mayor Huseyin Sozlu said: "It appears that the fire escape stairs door was locked. Bodies were found there," he said. He told NTV "of course children would have survived" if they had been able to flee down the fire es-

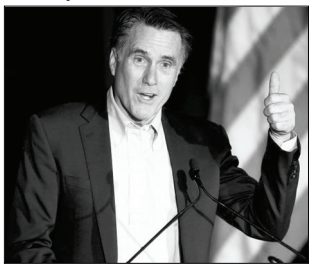
cape stairs. "From tomorrow the governor's office will start an investigation." He said the children were aged between 11-14.

Students trapped on the second and third storeys of the building who could not flee outside, were killed in the fire, the Doga news agency said. The fire spread rapidly because of the building's wooden interior and carpeted floor, officials said. Aladag district's prosecutor Mustafa Alpededik, quoted by the Doga news agency, said the fire erupted on the ground floor and then the flames spread because the third floor was wooden. With the burning of the wooden floor, the roof then entirely collapsed, he said. In an agonising wait, families who could not see their children stood outside in tears, Doga added. The dorm had a capacity for 54 students and was open to students were unable to use school students. Demirtas said it was a private dormitory with 34 students in residence. Fires are frequent in the region, which is antiquated and often wooden buildings and faulty electricals. But a disaster of this magnitude is highly unusual. (AFP)

Trump can lead US to a better future: Romney

WASHINGTON, NOV 30 /- Donald Trump is the "man who can lead the US to a better future", his former bitter critic and 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney said, asserting that he was impressed by the President-elect's post-victory speeches and selection of his team members, including Nikki Haley. "I happen to think that America's best days are ahead of us. I think you're going to see America continue to lead the world in this century," Romney, a former Governor of Massachusetts, told reporters after having a dinner with Trump in a New York restaurant. This was the second meeting between the two after Trump was elected as the President on November 8.

He would take the oath of office on January 20 next year. "What I've seen through these discussions I've had with President-elect Trump, as well as what we've seen in his speech the night of his victory, as well as the people he's selected as part of his transition, all of those things combined give me increasing hope that President-elect Trump is the very man who can lead us to that better future," said Romney, who is now being considered for the position of Secretary of State. This is quite an about turn for Romney who had openly opposed Trump during the primaries and had called him "phony". After his impressive victory, Romney has shown interest in the top diplomatic position in the Trump Administration.



"I had a wonderful evening with President-elect Trump. We had another discussion about affairs throughout the world and these discussions I've had with him have been enlightening, and interesting, and engaging. I've enjoyed them very much," Romney said after the dinner. On the menu were young garlic soup with thyme and sautéed frog legs, diver scallops with caramelized cauliflower and a caper raisin emulsion. For their main course, Trump had sirloin with a citrus glaze and carrots. Romney had lamb chops with the mushroom bolognese sauce. Trump's White House Chief of Staff, Reince Priebus also joined them over dinner. All three had chocolate cake for dessert.

Romney said he was "very impressed" by the remarks he made on Trump's victory night. "By the way, it's not easy winning. I know that myself. He did something I tried to do and was unsuccessful in," he said. "The people he's selected as members of his Cabinet are solid, effective, capable people. Some of them I know very well. Nikki Haley and I go way back. She's an outspoken, strong, powerful leader. Tom Price is someone who actually came to my office before he had run for Senate and we spent time talking about healthcare. What an expert and solid thinker in that arena and others," he said. "Jeff Sessions is someone who I knew through my campaigns, helped me very early on, he has a distinguished record in the Senate. And, of course many others. Betsy DeVos and a long list of people, very impressive individuals," Romney said. (PTI)

20 nations celebrate issuing of Diwali stamp

NEW YORK, NOV 30 /- Nearly 20 countries, including two UN Security Council permanent members France and Great Britain have joined hands to celebrate here the issuing of the Diwali postage stamp by the US. The event co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Belarus and India to the UN office along with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine would attend the "Diwali" stamp dedication ceremony at the Trusteeship Council Chamber of the United Nations in New York on December 5, according to a media release.

The event would also honour Ranju Batra, chairman of the Diwali Stamp project, who worked behind the scene for several years campaigning before the US Postal Service (USPS) to issue a stamp in honour of the festival of lights. It has become the number one best seller in the history of USPS. So far more than 170,000 Diwali stamps have been sold. Other countries that have joined the event as co-sponsors are Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Moldova, Morocco, Panama, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Ukraine and Vietnam. On October 6, the stamp was launched here by the USPS, capping seven-year-long efforts by Indian-Americans and influential American lawmakers to commemorate the festival of lights. (PTI)

Hillary makes surprise facade at UNICEF gala

NEW YORK, NOV 30 /- Katy Perry was the night's big honoree, but Hillary Clinton got the biggest ovation as the former presidential candidate presented the top star with an award from UNICEF at Snowflake Ball. Clinton, who was not expected to attend, gave Perry the Audrey Hepburn Humanitarian Award for her charitable efforts with the organization. Her appearance at the event was a surprise, and Clinton got a sustained standing ovation from the cheering crowd. She described Perry as someone who has "the spirit and the energy and the compassion that Audrey Hepburn brought to her work from UNICEF."

She added that Perry had the most "Twitter followers, then jokingly added that she "might have some competition" an apparent reference to the ever-tweeting president-elect. Clinton also said Perry's lyrics "remind us when you get knocked down to get back up" causing more cheers to erupt in the audience. Perry was a big supporter of the Democrat, who won the popular vote, and even campaigned for her. She broke into tears when Clinton surprised her with her appearance at the event. In her acceptance speech, Perry credited Clinton for helping use her voice for more than just her hits. "Hillary has lit that voice inside of me, and that light will never go out!" she shouted. "It will get brighter and brighter and brighter. Thank you, Hillary. You motivate me and so many millions of people who appreciate you for your incredible work." Perry said as the crowd gave Clinton another ovation. (Agencies)

Bapu's Charkha among 100 'Most Influential Photos of All Time'

NEW YORK, NOV 30 /- A 1946 picture of Mahatma Gandhi with his Charkha (spinning wheel) in the foreground is among the 100 most influential images of all time, according to a compilation by Time magazine of "images that changed the world." The black and white photo of a bespectacled Gandhi taken by Margaret Bourke-White shows Gandhi sitting on a thin mattress on the floor, head bent down as he is reading the news while his spinning wheels sits in the foreground. The picture was taken for an article on India's leaders but less than two years later it was featured prominently in a tribute published after Gandhi's assassination. "It soon became an indelible image, the slain civil-disobedience crusader with his most potent symbol, and helped solidify the perception of Gandhi outside the subcontinent as a

saintly man of peace," Time said.

The Time collection includes 100 of the most iconic and history-altering images, dating from the 1820s to 2016 that have remained engrained in the human psyche from the time they were taken. Among the pictures is the tragic photo of the lifeless body of three-year-old Syrian Alan Kurdi lying face down on the shore near the coastal town of Bodrum, the 2011 Situation Room photo where US President Barack Obama and his team of senior officials watching the secret operation to kill Osama Bin Laden in real time. The 2001 image of man falling from the Twin Towers in a desperate attempt to save his life as well as the 1993 heart-rending photo of an emaciated toddler being stared at by a vulture as the young boy collapsed on the way to a medical centre in famine-ravaged Sudan. (PTI)



Colombia peace accord wins Senate approval

BOGOTA, NOV 30 /- Colombia's Senate has approved a revised peace accord between the government and the FARC rebel group, taking a first step toward ratifying an agreement that was rejected by voters. The text, which was renegotiated after an earlier version was given a thumbs down in the October 2 national referendum, now must be approved by the lower house of the Colombian Congress. Members of the Centro Democratico, the right-wing party that has led the opposition to a peace deal, walked out of the Senate in protest before yesterday night's vote.

The measure then passed by a vote of 75-0. Long live peace, long live Colombia," shouted Senate president Mauricio Lizcano as he closed the session. The accord seeks to end a 52-year-old armed conflict between the FARC, Colombia's largest leftist guerrilla group, and the state. Colombian voters, however wary of a deal that goes easy on rebel leaders, dealt an unexpected blow to the process when they voted against it.

The sides returned to the negotiating table in Havana and produced a new version that President Juan Manuel Santos insists takes into account the opposition's objections. Rather than strict rejection in another referendum, Santos, who won the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize, decided to submit the revised accord to the Congress for approval. His chief rival, ex-president Alvaro Uribe, has rejected the modified deal. Uribe has insisted, for instance, that FARC leaders should not be allowed to run for office while still serving sentences for atrocities. He demands any new accord be passed by referendum. The conflict has killed at least 260,000 people and displaced seven million, according to authorities. (AFP)

Syria regime shelling kills 21 civilians in east Aleppo

BEIRUT, NOV 30 /- Syrian government shelling killed 21 civilians, including two children, in an eastern district of Aleppo today, a monitoring group said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said dozens more were wounded in the artillery fire on the rebel-held Jubb al-Dubayb district. Observatory head Rami Abdulrahman said the shelling there was "fierce," and many people were stuck under the rubble of collapsed buildings. According to the White Helmets, a rescue group in opposition-controlled Syrian territory, the artillery fired at a group of displaced civilians seeking refuge from other eastern districts. Syrian state news agency SANA on Wednesday said that eight civilians including two children were killed in rebel rocket fire on government-controlled districts in the city. Another seven people were wounded, the agency said, citing a police source in Aleppo. More than 50,000 people have been displaced since regime forces began a ferocious offensive on rebels in second city Aleppo two weeks ago, according to the Observatory. Fighters loyal to President Bashar al-Assad have already seized at least a third of eastern Aleppo, an opposition stronghold since 2012. More than 300,000 people have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011 with protests calling for Assad's ouster.(AFP)