

## World News Roundup

## Philippines

## Daunting challenges

## 4-way battle for 2016 presidency

MANILA, Philippines, Oct 17, (AP): At least four major contenders have emerged in next year's presidential race in the Philippines after a weeklong registration of candidates closed Friday.

It has been nearly three decades since the country of 100 million emerged from dictatorship after the 1986 "people power" revolt, and under President Benigno Aquino III, the economy has been growing steadily. His predecessor has been



Poe

detained on an elections fraud charge and three senators were separately detained on corruption charges under Aquino's anti-graft fight.

But poverty, corruption, crime and insurgencies remain daunting challenges, and past

elections have been marred by fraud and violence, including the massacre of 58 people when followers of a candidate at odds with a warlord clan filed papers in a southern province months ahead of the 2010 vote.

The Commission on Elections said 130 candidates had registered for president and 19 for vice president. Most are unknown, and the commission said "nuisance" candidates who cannot mount a national campaign will be disqualified. More than 18,000 congressional and local posts will be decided in the May 9 election.

A look at the main contenders:

Although she lacks a formidable political party, independent candidate Sen **Grace Poe** has a crucial advantage - name recognition - in a country where many are swayed more by personalities than policy issues. Her mother and late father are among the most popular movie couples of all time.

The 47-year-old also has a poignant life story. As a newborn, she was abandoned in a church, and later adopted by her celebrity parents.

A political neophyte, she topped the senatorial elections in 2013 and has led in recent polls among potential presidential contenders. But she faces questions over her citizenship.

Poe renounced her Filipino citizenship when she moved to the United States to live with her husband, an American man of Filipino descent, and became an American. She became Filipino again a few years after returning to the Philippines in 2005. A lawyer has filed a complaint to have her candidacy voided, arguing that she was a founding and cannot meet a constitutional requirement for aspirants to be natural-born Filipinos.

## Opposed

Former Interior Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II has several factors in his favor for next year's race: He's the ruling Liberal Party's bet, has a presidential pedigree and, most importantly, is the choice of outgoing President Aquino, who remains popular. He's the grandson of the Philippines' first post-World War II president, a son of a prominent senator who opposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos and a scion of a wealthy political clan.

He was an investment banker before being drawn into politics in 1993 with a successful congressional run. Once a trade secretary, he's credited for helping the Philippines become one of the world's top outsourcing and call center hubs. Roxas, 58, served under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, but later became one of her sharpest critics when corruption allegations against her emerged.

Critics blame Roxas for transport woes and widespread crimes that plagued the public when he was at the top of the transport and interior and local government departments, which were in charge of those problems.

He has long suffered from low ratings, but they have improved lately.

A former human rights lawyer who says he rose from poverty through hard work, including collecting pig slop, Vice President Jejomar Binay helped fight Marcos as an activist. After the strongman fell in 1986, Binay started to build a name in politics as mayor of Makati city, the country's version of Wall Street.

In 2010, he was elected vice president and was given extra posts to oversee housing concerns and the welfare of millions of overseas Filipino workers, which helped make him popular.

Binay's survey ratings, however, started to dip when he faced allegations of corruption, including the use of dummy businessmen for vast real estate properties, which were investigated in months of televised Senate grillings that he skipped and called a political farce.

The 72-year-old has denied any wrongdoing. In an independent voter-preference survey last month, Binay placed a strong third among the top four contenders.



Kashmiri Sikhs kick a burning effigy of Gurmeeet Ram Rahim Singh, chief of the religious sect Dera Sacha Sauda, during a protest against the killing of two Sikh boys, in Srinagar, Indian-controlled Kashmir, on Oct 17. Two people were killed during police firing to control a crowd protesting against the alleged desecration of a Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, in Punjab state on

Wednesday. Most of the anger was directed at the religious sect with allegations that an anonymous note with a slogan popularly used by the sect was found at the place where the holy book was reportedly stolen from, according to news reports. (AP)

## India



Indian Hindu women of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) perform rituals with floral displays as they celebrate the 'Bathukamma' or 'Life Giver' Festival in Hyderabad on Oct 16. Women honor 'Bathukamma' with flowers that signify both life and eternity in their colours, seek blessings for prosperity and a good year, and celebrate during the Navratri (nine nights) festival. (AFP)

## Asia

## Philippines advises evacuation:

Disaster officials advised communities in flood-prone areas of the northern Philippines to evacuate Saturday as the slow-moving Typhoon Koppu bore down on the coast with heavy rains and high winds.

Heavy rains are expected to inundate many areas on the main northern island of Luzon even before the typhoon makes landfall early Sunday, and 24 hours thereafter, acting weather bureau chief Esperanza Cayanan said.

Cayanan said that another typhoon farther east and a high pressure area north of the country will hold Koppu in a "semi-stationary" position and shroud most of Luzon with an enormous band of thick rain clouds.

President **Benigno Aquino** appeared on national television to warn Filipinos about the typhoon and appealed for cooperation to prevent casualties.

The typhoon was packing sustained winds of 160 kilometers per hour (100 mph) and gusts of up to 190 kph (119 mph) early Saturday about 300 kilometers (188 miles) east of Aurora, one of two provinces where it is forecast to come ashore. Forecasters expected sustained winds will reach 185 kph (116 mph) before it hits land. (AP)

## Ausse to lift ban on 'cannabis':

Australia Saturday announced plans to legalise the growing of cannabis for medicinal purposes, saying those suffering debilitating illnesses deserved access to the most effective treatments.

Research, most recently findings published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in June, showed marijuana has some effectiveness in helping treat chronic pain.

But it also cautioned of a long list of side effects and the issue of whether or not it works remains a matter of debate globally.

Health Minister **Sussan Ley** said the government planned a licensing scheme to allow controlled cultivation and distribution for medicinal and scientific purposes.

She said it would deliver a safe, legal and sustainable supply of locally produced product for the first time.

When will Delhi wake up?  
New Delhi reels after rapes of girls aged 2, 5

## Challenge to Gandhi dynasty

## PM Modi to open 70-year-old secret files

NEW DELHI, Oct 17, (AFP): A toddler and a five-year-old girl were raped in separate attacks in New Delhi overnight with at least one gang-raped, police said Saturday, as activists warned of an "epidemic" of sexual violence in the capital.

The two-and-a-half-year-old girl was abducted from a religious event in west Delhi by two men on Friday night and raped before being dumped in a park near her home, relatives and police said. In a separate incident on the other side of the city, the five-year-old was lured to a neighbour's house and raped by three men, a police officer told AFP.

The two attacks come as New Delhi grapples with a grim litany of sexual attacks against women — and in several recent cases, children — that have sparked outrage in India and abroad.

"We have launched a manhunt for the suspects. So far no one has been arrested," Pushendra Kumar, West Delhi police chief, told AFP of the younger girl's case.

"Two men were involved in the abduction of the girl and the tests have confirmed rape," Kumar said, adding that further examinations would show whether both men raped the toddler.

## Bleeding

He said they found the younger child bleeding profusely several hours after she went missing. Police have released CCTV footage of two men riding away on a motorbike with the victim in an attempt to catch the alleged perpetrators.

Police arrested three men overnight in the case of the five-year-old victim, whom tests showed was raped multiple times, after locals managed to catch her alleged assailants and hand them over to the authorities.

"Her clothes were partially torn with blood spots all over them. Some locals saw her and she told them she was sexually assaulted," an officer from Anand Vihar police station in eastern Delhi told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Some of the locals then barged into the house and caught them (the alleged perpetrators) before handing them over to us," the officer said.

Both girls are undergoing medical treatment but are believed to be out of danger. The latest attacks come eight days after a four-year-old girl was allegedly raped and slashed with a blade before being abandoned by a railway track in the capital.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi says he will seek to unravel one of India's most enduring mysteries surrounding the independence struggle, the latest salvo in a growing history war that could undermine the opposition Congress party.

The fate of Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the Indian National Army which collaborated with the Japanese and Germans against the British in World War Two, has remained a riddle for seven decades.

Successive Indian governments have kept hundreds of files related to his death secret, saying the release of the information could prejudice relations with foreign nations, fuelling conspiracy theories about how he died.

Modi's decision this week to declassify all files on India's most enigmatic nationalist hero may finally end the controversy.

The findings could also embarrass India's most famous political dynasty, because of the role played by first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the aftermath of Bose's death.

Since trouncing the Nehru-Gandhi family's Congress party in a general election last year, Modi has chipped away at its grip on India's post-colonial history.

Modi's government has

announced plans to change a museum set up to honour Nehru so it will reflect a wider range of leaders. His government has also erased the names of Nehru and his descendants from government schemes, places and postage stamps.

At a meeting on Wednesday, Modi met Bose's relatives to tell them the files would be declassified from January onwards to coincide with his 119th birthday.

"By ending the speculation it will allow us to assess his full contribution to the independence movement," said Sidharth Nath Singh, a leader from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who met the Bose family.

The Indian government has officially said Bose died of burns when his aircraft crashed in Taiwan while he was on his way to Tokyo, three days after the end of World War Two.

Many Indians refuse to believe that. Some think he faked his own death to avoid capture, with reports saying he lived in the Soviet Union or in India disguised as a holy man.

A six-year inquiry headed by a Supreme Court judge found in 2006 that neither Taiwan nor the United States had any record of his plane crashing. It also found his supposed ashes in a shrine in Tokyo were those of a soldier.

Singh said the release of the files

could embarrass Congress if they showed Nehru's government thought he was alive but did not want him to return to public life.

"The release of the files does have political ramifications, you can't ignore it," said Singh.

Nehru's government spied on Bose's family for two decades, suggesting it thought he may be alive, files declassified by West Bengal's government last month show.

Campaigners believe files held by the central government will provide greater clarity on his fate.

Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyar said the files will exonerate Nehru, and the reason they were kept secret is that they probably embarrass a foreign ally, but enough time has passed for it not to matter.

"The idea that they will embarrass Nehru is pure BJP fantasy," said Aiyar.

About 200-300 files held by the prime minister's office, intelligence bureau and foreign ministry will be declassified, Singh said.

Bose campaigned against British colonial rule with Mahatma Gandhi for 20 years, but fell out with him because he believed non-violence would fail.

To millions of Indians, he was a patriot who took a heroic stance against British imperialism and who has failed to get sufficient recognition in independent India.

Such horrific crimes.

"Delhi is not safe and secure for women and the situation is deteriorating," Kumari told AFP.

"Most of these incidents have been reported in lower income areas like slums and densely populated areas, where mostly migrants stay. These men live in cramped spaces with no social or parental control and usually no fear of law," she said.

The fatal gang rape of a young student on a bus in Delhi in 2012 led to an outpouring of anger over frightening levels of violence against women.

India recorded 36,735 rape cases in 2014, with 2,096 of them in Delhi.

Experts say those figures likely under-represent the true scale of the crimes.

Police arrested a 25-year-old man in that attack, in which the young girl suffered severe internal injuries.

"When will Delhi wake up? Till when will girls continue to be brutalized in Indian capital. Gangrape of 2.5 year n 5 year old. Shameful," Delhi Commission for Women chairwomen Swati Maliwal tweeted Saturday.

Describing the assaults as "extremely shocking", Maliwal told Indian television station NDTV that violence against women had assumed "epidemic proportions" in Delhi.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressed anguish over the rapes Saturday, terming them "shameful and worrying" on Twitter, but blamed his political opponent Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government

for the security situation in Delhi. "Repeated rape of minors is shameful and worrying. Delhi police has completely failed to provide safety. What are PM n his LG (lieutenant governor) doing?" Kejriwal tweeted before heading to meet the victims in hospital. Kejriwal and Modi's administration are jostling for control of the capital's police department, with Delhi city authorities saying they are unable to improve security for women.

They deflect the blame on to Modi's central government which controls Delhi's 84,000 police, the largest metropolitan police force in the world.

Ranjana Kumari, head of Delhi-based Centre for Social Research said the ongoing turf war between the two governments left Delhi vulnerable to

three children, were killed when a vehicle they were travelling in collided with a bus in southern India, injuring 25 people, police said Saturday.

The accident occurred early Saturday when a truck carrying at least 40 wedding party members hit a passenger bus coming from the opposite direction in Prakasam district in Andhra Pradesh state.

"So far 15 people have been confirmed dead and around 25 are injured," Prakasam police chief Srikanth, who goes by one name, told AFP over the phone.

Srikanth said the truck caught fire after crashing into the moving bus, leaving many trapped inside the burning vehicle near Kandukur town some 350 kms (220 miles) from state capital Hyderabad. (AP)



Aquino



Ley

**15 killed in bus crash:** At least 15 members of a wedding party, including