

NEWSIN brief

Assange arrest warrant upheld

AFP, Stockholm

A Swedish court yesterday upheld an arrest warrant against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for alleged sexual assault. The decision is a setback for 43-year-old Assange, who has been holed up at the Ecuadoran embassy in London for over two years in a bid to avoid extradition to Sweden. The warrant was issued over allegations of rape and sexual molestation which

Pak firing at Kashmir kills 1 Indian troop

TNN, Jammu

In a major ceasefire violation, Pakistani Rangers yesterday opened heavy fire at Indian border outposts along the international border in Jammu district, leaving one BSF jawan dead and 3 injured. The ceasefire violation comes a day after the two sides held a flag meeting to discuss removal of wild bushes along the zero line and adjoining areas to improve visibility

British cops arrest '660 paedophiles'

AFP, London

British police have arrested 660 suspected paedophiles including doctors, teachers and care workers in a six-month operation targeting people watching indecent images online, the National Crime Agency said yesterday. The operation led to the safeguarding of 400 children and has resulted in charges brought ranging from possessing indecent images of children to serious sexual

Typhoon kills 13 in Philippines

AFP, Manila

The first typhoon of the Philippines' brutal rainy season shut down the nation's capital yesterday, killing at least 13 people across the country and cutting power for millions. Typhoon Rammasun tore in from the Pacific Ocean with wind gusts of about 250 kilometres an hour and smashed into poor fishing communities in the east of the archipelago on Tuesday night. Since then,

7 jailed for life over Cairo sexual assaults

AFP, Cairo

Seven men were sentenced to life in prison yesterday over sexual assaults at Cairo's Tahrir Square, following a pledge by Egypt's new authorities to tackle an epidemic in such crimes. The attacks took place on June 3 and 8 as revellers celebrated Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's presidential election victory and inauguration, and on January 25, 2013 when Egypt marked the second anniversary of the

One-third of world's extreme poor in India

PTI, New Delhi

One third of the extreme poor global population reside in India which has also recorded the highest number of under-five deaths in the world, the latest UN Millennium Development Goals report has said. According to the report, India accounts for 17% of

Iraqi army retreats from Tikrit

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraqi forces have withdrawn from the militant-held city of Tikrit after their new offensive met heavy resistance. The failure highlights the difficulties of Baghdad's struggle to recapture territory lost from the insurgents who seized Mosul, Tikrit and other cities last month in a rapid offensive which threatens to fragment Iraq on



Young relatives of four boys, all from a family, killed during Israeli shelling, cry during their funeral in Gaza City, yesterday. Inset, Smoke billowing from Gaza following an Israeli air strike. The deaths raised the overall toll in nine days of violence in Gaza to 220.

PHOTO: AFP

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

'Dutch liable for deaths'



AFP, The Hague

A court in the Netherlands yesterday ruled that the Dutch state was liable for the deaths of over 300 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in the Srebrenica massacre, the worst atrocity on European soil since World War II.

Families of the victims had brought a case the Dutch government over the 1995 killings, accusing Dutch UN peacekeepers of failing to protect the 8,000 slaughtered by ethnic Serb troops just a few months before the end of the Bosnian war.

The tiny Muslim enclave was under UN protection until July 11, 1995 when it was overrun by ethnic Serb forces under the command of Ratko Mladic, who is currently on trial on genocide and war crimes charges over the war in Bosnia, including Srebrenica.

Mladic's troops brushed aside the lightly-armed Dutch peacekeepers in a "safe area" where thousands of Muslims from surrounding villages had gathered for protection.

In the subsequent days, almost 8,000 Muslim men and boys were slaughtered and their bodies dumped in mass graves in what two international courts have ruled was genocide.

"The state is liable for the loss suffered by relatives of the men who were deported by the Bosnian Serbs from the Dutchbat (Dutch battalion) compound in Potocari in the afternoon of 13 July, 1995," judge Larissa Elwin said.

"Dutchbat should have taken into account the possibility that these men would be the victim of genocide and that it can be said with sufficient certainty that, had the Dutchbat allowed them to stay at the compound, these men would have remained alive," she ruled. However, the court ruled that the state was not liable on all counts.

The Mothers of Srebrenica, representing some 6,000 widows and victims' relatives, have been seeking justice for years for the massacre, which the UN's highest International Court of Justice has ruled was genocide.



AIDS could be wiped out by 2030: UN

AFP, Geneva

Global AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections have fallen by over a third in a decade, raising hopes of beating the killer disease by 2030, the United Nations said yesterday.

With more than half of the 35 million people living with HIV unaware they are infected, the battle is far from over however, said Michel Sidibe, head of UNAIDS.

"If we are smart and scale up fast by 2020, we'll be on track to end the epidemic by 2030, so that AIDS is no longer a public health threat," he told reporters.

"We have a fragile window of opportunity, because what we do over the next five years will determine the next 15."

In a report released ahead of the 20th International AIDS Conference in Australia from July 20-25, the UN agency said AIDS-related deaths dropped to 1.5 million in 2013 from 1.7 million the previous year.

That was the sharpest annual decline since the epidemic's peak in 2004 and 2005, and marked a 35-percent drop from the 2.4 million deaths seen in both those years.

New infections also fell to 2.1 million last year, down 38 percent compared to the 3.4 million in 2001.

Africa remains the hardest-hit continent, with 1.1 million deaths in 2013, 1.5 million new infections, and 24.7 million people living with HIV.

Globally, the report said 35 million people were living with the virus in 2013, up from 34.6 million the

Pak jets, US drones pound militants; 50 killed

REUTERS, Peshawar

The Pakistani military said its jets killed 35 suspected militants yesterday as part of an anti-Taliban offensive hours after US drones attacked another area nearby and killed up to 20 people.

The violence in Pakistan comes as the United States struggles to bring stability to neighbouring Afghanistan before most of its forces pull out after 12 years of inconclusive war.

Taliban and other al Qaeda-linked fighters battling in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have for years mingled in strongholds in Pakistan's ungoverned, ethnic Pashtun border lands but there has been little coordination in confronting them between US-led forces in Afghanistan and their Pakistani allies.

Yesterday, Pakistani jets killed 35 suspected militants in the Shawal valley, a

remote militant stronghold on the Pakistani side of the border opposite Afghanistan's Paktika, Pakistani military officials said.

Hours earlier, US drone aircraft attacked militants in Datta Khel, a town in North Waziristan region near the border. Resident Malik Wakil Khan, said 18 bodies had been recovered from the rubble of a compound.

Pakistani security officials gave tolls of from 15 to 20 killed.

Pakistan has promised to eradicate all militants from North Waziristan, a stark departure from a traditional policy of tolerating some militants that do not attack the Pakistani state.

More than half a million civilians were ordered to leave their homes before ground operations started. Residents say most militants left too. Some of the militants are believed to have gone to ground in Pakistan's cities, while others have apparently fanned out into remote mountains and forests in



CNN & THE HINDU

Each day, they live in fear.

Sometimes it's the fear of rockets dropping from the sky. Sometimes it's violent fundamentalists taking over their cities. Sometimes it's the barrel bombs stuffed with TNT and nails.

Exactly what horror they face depends on which border they live within. Syria, Iraq, Gaza, Israel and Libya.

Each with its unique crisis, but all now unified in a heightened sense of anxiety as years of conflict come to a head.

"I would argue," US Sen John McCain said this week, "that given conditions in the Middle East, this might be more dangerous than any time in the past."

SYRIA: DEATH TOLL KEEPS MOUNTING

Three years of civil war have left much of the country in shambles. While regime helicopters drop barrel bombs on opposition neighborhoods, dissidents say, the government maintains its stance that it's only fighting terrorists. As if the civil war wasn't enough, the radical Sunni group Islamic State in Iraq in Syria is using this opportunity to carve its own swath of territory from the Iraq border to deep inside Syria. Reports say more than 172,000 people have been killed in the past three years. But at this point, many have stopped counting.

IRAQ: ON BRINK OF COLLAPSE

This month was supposed mark Iraq's first steps toward a new government. But it's hard to tout political gains when ISIS militants keep barreling across the country, snatching entire cities and threatening to take over Baghdad. ISIS now controls land on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border -- opening the floodgates for weapons and fighters between the two countries. Sectarian tensions are rife and can cause a broader humanitarian crisis, if political solution not found in short time. "No one is winning; no one can win," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. "Even if one side were to prevail in the short term, the devastating toll will have sown the seeds of future conflict."

LIBYA: A FREE-FOR-ALL NATION

Nearly three years after Libyan rebels overthrew a longtime dictator, the country is no closer to lasting stability. The civil war that culminated in Muammar Gaddafi's 2011 death has given way to warring militias fighting over Tripoli's international airport. At least 90% of the planes there have been damaged, and it would cost hundreds of millions of dollars to repair them, the government said. The chaos in the capital is so dire now that officials are considering asking for international troops -- even though the government is virtually powerless and has very little influence on what's happening on the ground.

GAZA AND ISRAEL: HISTORY REPEATS, WHO CARES?

What was supposed to be a cease-fire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militant group Hamas this week now seems like a joke. Rockets fired by Hamas on Tuesday were quickly matched by airstrikes from Israel. And so the exchanges continue.

While both rockets and rhetoric fly, Human Rights Watch said Israeli air attacks have been "killing civilians in violation of the laws of war." An Israeli military spokesman said civilian casualties in Gaza are

Middle East in flames

"a human tragedy" -- but that it's Hamas' fault. While the blame-game continues, more than 200 people have been killed in Gaza since the offensive started a week ago.

WAR WITHOUT WINNERS

In her autobiographical work, based on her tenure as US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton makes a startling statement while explaining the need for US intervention around the world, despite the "dangers" to American lives. "While we can and must work to reduce the danger," writes Hillary, "the only way to eliminate risk entirely is to retreat entirely and to accept the consequences of the void we leave behind. When America is absent, extremism takes root, our interests suffer, and our security at home is threatened" (Hard Choices, p.387, Simon & Schuster, 2014).

It is curious that Hillary thinks that extremism thrives when America is absent, as empirical facts and the patterns one can glean from them indicate that the opposite is truer. While Iraq and ISIS' brutal advance on Baghdad is at the top of the news now, it must be remembered that each of the countries today at the centre of the world's concerns over



extremism is in fact a country that has seen direct or indirect western intervention, not western absence -- Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Iraq.

In each of these countries, what the United States, along with allies sought to oust were authoritarian regimes that were secular. The Soviet-backed regimes of President Najibullah in Afghanistan, President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. The movements these leaders set up were dictatorial; but a by-product of the secularism was that women and minorities had a more secure status under these regimes. Despite being dictators, Assad, Gaddafi, Saddam and Najibullah could effectively overshadow the sectarian divide in their countries.

When the West has tried to intervene to oust them, it has always strengthened the opposition to these leaders, which by definition includes groups that are anti-secular, jihadi extremists. Whether it is by design or otherwise, it is these groups that have eventually taken control of the entire opposition. Finally, this intervention has led to a carving up of the country on sectarian lines; along bitter, historic, ethnic and communal lines. The results are in front of us.

'We want to live' Gaza residents plead for peace

CNN ONLINE

Shuja'iya, a neighborhood east of the center of Gaza City, looked like a ghost town yesterday after many people had fled during the night.

Shops in the area's central market had their shutters down and locked. Ambulances were stationed around the periphery waiting for the attacks Israel had warned of to begin.

With hopes of a cease-fire in Gaza shattered Tuesday by Hamas rockets that provoked renewed Israeli airstrikes, thousands of people have fled their homes, taking refuge in UN buildings, some of which have been damaged by the Israeli bombardments.

The Israeli Defense Forces yesterday said that it warned, through recorded messages, text messages and leaflets, residents of three areas in Gaza, which has around 100,000 people, to vacate their homes because of its plans to carry out airstrikes on Hamas and other terrorist groups.

The Israeli military accuses Hamas is taking the people of Gaza hostage by using places like houses, hospitals and schools to hide weapons.

Many people living amid the daily Israeli bombardments of the impoverished Palestinian territory say they want peace. But they also want greater freedom.

"I'm not happy to see Israeli children hurt," says Mustafa, who once worked in Israel. "I have grandchildren, I don't want them to be hurt. We want to live."

Other residents say it's not as straightforward as a simple halt to hostilities, complaining about longstanding Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza.

"We are in jail here, big jail," said Abu Ashraf, a 65-year-old in the Shati refugee camp in northern Gaza, where distant explosions could be heard.

Hamas' political wing has said that what Palestinians really want is an end to the Israeli blockade on Gaza that is suffocating the daily lives of the 1.8 million Palestinians living there.

A woman in the southern Gaza town of Khan Yunis said some people had fled there from harder hit areas in the north and east of the territory, filling some homes with multiple families.

She said she believed other people were staying in their houses, regardless of warnings from Israeli leaflets or other means.

"These are their homes, they will not run, she said.

"These are more threats than warnings," says Abu Rahma of the Mezan Center. "Telling 150,000 people to leave their homes when there are airstrikes all along the route and nowhere to go because every home in every place is a target."

Abu Odeh in Shabilya tells CNN, "There's no escape."

"God has sealed our fate, whether we stay or leave."

Syria: Assad sworn in

Says West, Arabs to
'pay high price for
supporting terror'



AFP, Damascus

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad was sworn in yesterday for a new seven-year term, warning Western and Arab governments they will pay dearly for backing those who took up arms against him.

In a triumphant speech delivered after he took the oath of office at a red carpet ceremony in Damascus, Assad branded the 2011 Arab uprisings a "fake spring".

Assad, 48, won a June election denounced as a "farce" by his detractors as it was staged more than three years into a devastating war that has killed more than 170,000 people and uprooted millions.

"Syrians, three years and four months... have passed since some cried 'freedom'," Assad declared, referring to the 2011 revolt.

"They wanted a revolution, but you have been the real revolutionaries. I congratulate you for your revolution and for your victory," Assad told his supporters.

"Those who lost their way can now see clearly... the monstrous faces have been unveiled, the mask of freedom and the revolution has fallen."

During the first two years of the Syrian revolt, which began as a peaceful protest movement before transforming into an armed rebellion, the opposition's Western and Arab supporters repeatedly insisted he must step down.

But the rise of the jihadist Islamic State (IS) has turned the tide and raised fears about the future.

Assad has repeatedly branded the revolt as a foreign-backed "terrorist plot", refusing to recognise any genuine movement for change.