

Modi's 'proxy war'
remark tailor-made
for armed forces

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New
Delhi

The Indian print media
yesterday editorially came
out with mixed response to
Prime Minister Narendra
Modi's remark that Pakistan
has lost the strength to fight
a conventional war against
India but continues to
engage in a proxy war of
terrorism.

The print media was
unanimous in suggesting that
Modi's remarks were
tailor-made for their audience — a gathering of army
and air force personnel in
Jammu and Kashmir close to the
de facto border with
Pakistan.

**Morocco busts jihadist
Iraq, Syria recruitment
network**

AFP, Rabat

The Moroccan interior ministry
said yesterday it has
dismantled, "in close collaboration
with Spain", a network responsible for recruiting
jihadists and sending them to fight in Syria and
Iraq for the Islamic State group.

Morocco says it has dismantled many jihadist cells -- including 18 from 2011 to 2013 -- since a series of suicide attacks that killed 33 people in Casablanca in May 2003.

**Yemen Qaeda chief
praises Iraqi jihadis**

AFP, Sanaa

An influential Al-Qaeda leader in Yemen has praised Islamic State militants for their "victories in Iraq" but without pledging allegiance to their self-proclaimed "caliph" or leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

"I congratulate all the mujahideen on different fronts and all Muslims for the victories won by our brothers in Iraq against the puppets (of Shiite Iran)," ideological leader Ibrahim al-Rubaish says in a video posted online.

**US drones strike
jihadist target in
northern Iraq**

AFP, Washington

The US air campaign in Iraq against jihadist militants from the so-called Islamic State continued Wednesday with a drone strike on an armed truck west of the Yazidi town of Sinjar, the military said.

US Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East, said the vehicle was close to an IS checkpoint and that all US aircraft had left the area safely after it was destroyed.

**Life sentence to
Phoolan Devi killer**

TIMES OF INDIA, Online

A Delhi court yesterday pronounced life sentence, and a fine of Rs 1 lakh, to lone convict Sher Singh Rana for the murder of bandit-turned-politician Phoolan Devi in 2001.

The prosecution had sought death penalty for Rana, calling him a threat to society.



PHOTO: AFP

Displaced Iraqi people from the Yazidi community take refuge in a camp near the Turkey-Iraq border at Silopi in Sirnak yesterday. *Inset:* one of the Yazidi girl's is pictured gathering water for her family living within the enclave. At least 20,000 civilians, most of whom are from the Yazidi community, besieged by jihadists on a mountain in northern Iraq have safely escaped to Syria and escorted by Kurdish forces back into Iraq, officials said.

YAZIDIS ON THE RUN

Plan 'under way' to rescue refugees on Iraq mountain: Cameron

AFP, London

An international plan is under way to rescue civilians trapped by Islamic State fighters on a mountain in northern Iraq, British Prime Minister David Cameron said Wednesday.

Cameron declined to give details of the operation but said Britain would play a role, just as it had worked alongside the United States in conducting humanitarian aid drops to thousands of Yazidis and other minorities who have fled to Mount Sinjar.

'Far fewer' stranded on Iraq mountain than feared: US

AFP, Dohuk

An American assessment team found "far fewer" Yazidis trapped in northern Iraq than expected, making an evacuation mission less likely, as the flight of minority groups from advancing jihadists showed no let-up yesterday.

The Pentagon said that -- based on a firsthand assessment by a small party of US military personnel -- the plight of those on the mountain was not as bad as had been feared, and an evacuation mission was therefore "far less likely".

Turkey gives refuge to 2,000 Yazidis fleeing Iraq

AFP, Silopi

Turkey is providing refuge to some 2,000 members of Iraq's Yazidi community who have fled the deadly advance of Islamic State militants in Iraq, officials said yesterday.

Most of the Yazidis are being housed in tents at a refugee camp in Silopi just north of the Iraqi border in the Sirnak province of southeastern Turkey.

Australia makes its first airdrop to stranded Yazidis

AFP, Sydney

Australia has carried out its first airdrop to refugees in northern Iraq, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said yesterday, joining a growing international effort to deliver humanitarian assistance.

"The mission was conducted by a RAAF C-130 Hercules delivering 10 pallets of badly needed supplies to Yazidi civilians trapped on Mount Sinjar by encircling ISIL forces," he said, referring to Islamic State militants, previously known as ISIL.

Yazidis say neighbours enabled jihadist attack

AFP, Fishkhabur

Yazidis fleeing a jihadist onslaught in northern Iraq say neighbours took up arms alongside their attackers, informing on members of the religious minority and helping the militants take over.

"The (non-Iraqi) jihadis were Afghans, Bosnians, Arabs and even Americans and British fighters," said Sabah Hajji Hassan, a 68-year-old Yazidi who managed to flee the bloody offensive by the Islamic Statejihadist group. "But the worst killings came from the people living among us, our (Sunni) Muslim neighbours -- the Metwet, Khawata and Kejala tribes. But they joined the IS, took heavy weapons from them, and informed on who was Yazidi and who was not. Our neighbours made the IS takeover possible," the distraught white-bearded Hassan said.

UN Council urges quick action to form Iraqi government

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council on Wednesday called on new Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to quickly form a government capable of beating back a jihadist offensive.

The 15-member council said in a statement that the choice of Abadi was "an important step" toward

forming an inclusive government that would be able to counter the advance by Islamic State fighters.

The council "urge the prime minister-designate, Haider al-Abadi, to work swiftly to form such a government as quickly as possible and within the constitutional timeframe," said the statement.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-

moon has pointed to the "lack of inclusiveness" in the previous Shi'ite-dominated government of Nuri al-Maliki as one of the causes behind the rise of the jihadis.

Fighters from the extremist Islamic State have made dramatic gains in Iraq, prompting the United States to order air strikes to halt their advance and air drops to help tens of

thousands of fleeing civilians.

The top UN body is working on a draft resolution that would aim to choke off the flow of foreign fighters and financial support to IS fighters in Iraq and in Syria.

The resolution that provides for sanctions is in discussion among experts and could come up for a vote later this week.

Hillary's Obama balancing act

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton broke bread Wednesday, trying to defuse a bitter row over foreign policy as the former US secretary of state eyes a possible 2016 bid for the White House.

But aides did not immediately confirm whether the pair had indeed taken part in a highly anticipated conciliatory hug before 150 guests at a dinner on Martha's Vineyard that was closed to the press.

"A good time was had by all," said White House deputy spokesman Eric Schultz.

"The president and first lady also were happy to have the chance to spend time with

secretary Clinton and former president (Bill) Clinton," Schultz said.

After a ferociously bitter battle with Obama for the 2008 Democratic presidential ticket, Hillary was a loyal lieutenant in the president's first administration before she stepped down in 2013.

But the increasing probability of a Clinton presidential bid will place the 66-year-old's relationship with Obama under scrutiny.

So far Hillary has remained silent on her intentions, yet all of her actions -- a series of lectures, a tour to promote her latest memoir, media appearances -- appear calibrated towards a 2016 campaign.

PROMOTING INDO-PAK TIES Sharif seeks new ways

PTI, Islamabad

Raking up the Kashmir issue, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday said it is the "main source of tension" in Indo-Pak relations and sought its peaceful resolution to explore new ways to bolster bilateral ties.

"We want peaceful resolution of Kashmir with our full sincerity so that by removing this main source of tension, Pakistan and India could find new ways for promoting their relations," he said while addressing the Independence Day parade after midnight in Islamabad.

Sharif's remarks come close on the heels of a spat between the two countries over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech accusing Pakistan of continuing to engage in a proxy war of terrorism against India.

Pak anti-govt protest marches begin

AFP, Lahore

Thousands of protesters set off from the Pakistani city of Lahore yesterday to march on the capital in a bid to unseat the government, which they claim was elected by fraud.

Supporters of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan and populist preacher Tahir-ul-Qadri massed separately in Lahore before beginning the 300-kilometre journey to rally in Islamabad.

Both Khan and Qadri say the May 2013 general election was rigged and want Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to resign and hold new polls. Sharif won by a landslide.

The two groups, travelling in motorised convoy to Islamabad on the anniversary of Pakistan's independence from Britain, made slow progress leaving Lahore.

The authorities had insisted Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehreek march would not be allowed, but relented in the afternoon.

Khan, whose Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf political party came third in the polls, was earlier given the go-ahead for his "Azadi" (freedom) march.

Government officials have accused the march organisers of trying to derail democracy and Sharif said the marches were a distraction from more pressing issues.

Pakistan is currently waging a military offensive against Taliban hideouts in its northwest, while also trying to boost a sagging economy and solve a chronic power supply crisis.

"This is the real Azadi march, taking place here, both civil and military leadership is together here and celebrating Pakistan's independence day, what can be a bigger march than this?" said Sharif.

The prime minister spoke at a ceremony to reopen a house once owned by Pakistan's founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah, alongside army chief General Raheel Sharif, in an apparent show of unity.



Clockwise: Pakistani policemen carry sticks as they gather at a roadblock of shipping containers in Islamabad; Supporters of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan cheer as he heads a protest march from Lahore to Islamabad against the government, in Lahore yesterday; and supporters of cleric Tahir-ul-Qadri flash the victory sign outside his residence in Lahore on Wednesday. The Pakistani capital braced for political unrest as the two opposition leaders vowed to defy a court order and march on the city for a major protest aimed at bringing down the government.

UKRAINE CRISIS Russian convoy rolls on Fighting intensifies; Kiev passes law allowing Russia sanctions

AFP, Donetsk, Kiev

A massive Russian "humanitarian" convoy, a three-kilometre (two-mile) file of white-tarpaulin-covered lorries, closed in on Ukraine's border yesterday despite doubts over whether the trucks would be allowed across, and as deadly fighting rocked rebel-held strongholds.

The nearly 300 vehicles headed towards southeastern Ukraine, even as intense shelling there in the insurgent bastions of Donetsk and Lugansk -- where the trucks appear headed -- sharply increased the death toll from fighting.

Health authorities in Donetsk, the centre of which was under heavy shelling by the army, said 74 people were killed in fighting over the past three days.

Government forces at the same time reported nine dead and 18 injured among its troops following four months of fighting that have left over 2,000 dead and many residents without power, running water and with dwindling food supplies.

Ukraine's parliament, meanwhile, yesterday approved a law paving the way for a string of sanctions on Russian businesses and nationals accused of backing a separatist uprising in the east of the country.

Kiev has drawn up a sanctions list of 65 mainly Russian companies and 172 individuals and the new law now gives Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council -- headed by the president -- the right to impose the punitive measures.

The law also allows Ukraine to stop the transit of goods across its territory, a move that could potentially see Russian gas blocked from transiting the country to Europe.

Russia should not cut itself off from West: Putin

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia should not "fence itself off from the outside world" despite a plunge in East-West relations over the pro-Kremlin insurgency in Ukraine.

Putin added during a visit to Crimea -- seized by Russia from Ukraine in March -- that an ongoing trade war with the United States and Europe did not mean Moscow "should break ties with partners. But we should also not let them treat us with disdain."

The comments saw the Russian ruble shoot up to a nine-day high against the dollar because investors interpreted them as a signal by Putin that he preferred not to escalate the deadly Ukrainian crisis much further.

The Kremlin's relations with the West have hit their lowest point since the worst years of the Cold War because of Putin's alleged

backing of Russian-speaking insurgents.

We Mourn



Dhaka Bank family deeply mourns the sad demise of Mrs. Khandaker Halima Bari, the beloved mother of Former Sponsor Director of Dhaka Bank Limited Mr. Khandaker Mohammad Shahjahan. She breathed her last at 8:15 pm on August 13, 2014 at DIPHAM Hospital, Dhaka (Inshallah Rajeun). She was 82.

We pray for the salvation of her departed soul and express our deepest sympathy to the bereaved family of the deceased.