

NEWSIN brief

Suicide bomber kills 11 Iraqi Shiite worshippers

AFP, Baghdad

A suicide bomber attacked Shiite worshippers during prayers in eastern Baghdad yesterday, killing 11 people, security and medical officials said. The attack, which targeted a Shiite place of worship, or husseiniyah, also wounded 32 people, the officials said.

Afghan election crisis in crucial phase

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's 10-week election crisis entered a risky new stage yesterday when officials started invalidating fraudulent votes in a process likely to bring to a head the bitter dispute between the presidential candidates. The country has been in paralysis since the June 14 election to choose the successor to President Hamid Karzai, who will step down as US-led NATO troops prepare to end their 13-year war against Taliban insurgents.

Thousands flee after latest Boko Haram attack in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Scores of heavily armed Boko Haram fighters yesterday attacked military and police stations in the Nigerian town of Gamboru Ngala on the Cameroon border, forcing thousands to flee, residents said. The latest insurgent violence comes after Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau declared that the town of Gwoza -- southwest of Gamboru Ngala in the same Borno state -- was now under an Islamic caliphate.

10 dead in India temple stampede

AFP, New Delhi

A stampede at a Hindu temple in central India killed at least 10 people and injured scores, the latest in a string of deadly accidents at religious events, an official and reports said. Hundreds of pilgrims were gathering early at a holy hill in Chitrakoot area of Madhya Pradesh state when some tripped and fell, sparking panic, a police official told AFP.



'Guilty until proven innocent'

Mayor of London brands all Iraq, Syria returnees

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Anyone attempting to return to the UK from visiting Iraq or Syria "without a good reason" should be classified as a potential terrorist and arrested, Boris Johnson has said.

The Mayor of London, who will be standing as a Tory MP next year, wants the law to be reversed so there is a "rebuttable presumption" of guilt until people are proven innocent.

"Do nothing now, and the tide of terror will eventually lap at our own front door," he wrote in the Telegraph.

As many as 500 British citizens are believed to be fighting for the Islamic State and other terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, including a former London rapper then known as L. Jinny, who is believed to be one of many UK-born terrorists under investigation for the murder of James Foley.

Writing in his Telegraph column, Johnson argued more needs to be done to prevent foreign extremists travelling to Iraq and Syria, including Turkey shutting the border.



Clockwise from left: A Palestinian walks on the rubble of a mosque that was partially damaged by an Israeli airstrike yesterday in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. Palestinians walk through the rubble of a house, and a Palestinian climbs through the rubble of a house after they were hit in Israeli air strikes in Gaza City yesterday. Violence reverberated across Gaza with four Palestinians killed in Israeli air strikes as Egypt proposed a new ceasefire that would open key crossings into the blockaded territory.



PHOTO:
AFP

Syria says ready to work with US against 'terror'

AFP, Damascus

Syria said yesterday it was willing to work with the international community, including the United States, to tackle "terrorism" but that any strikes on its territory must be coordinated with Damascus.

Foreign Minister Walid Muallem made the comments as the Islamic State jihadist group advances in Syria and neighbouring Iraq, where Washington is already carrying out air strikes.

"Syria is ready for cooperation and coordination at the regional and international level to fight terrorism and implement UN Security Council Resolution 2170," Muallem said.

Muallem said Syria was willing to work within international or regional coalitions as well as on bilateral terms.

He said Damascus was also prepared to work with the United States and Britain, both of which back Syrian

rebels in their fight to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad.

"They are welcome," he said. But he said any military action inside Syrian territory must be carried out in coordination with the government and respect the country's sovereignty.

"We must feel that the cooperation is serious and not double standards. Any violation of Syria's sovereignty would be an act of aggression," he said.

Asked if Syria's air defences could shoot down US planes, he said: "That could happen if there was not prior coordination. We are proposing international cooperation and coordination to prevent" such a scenario. There would be "no justification" for strikes on Syrian territory "except in coordination with us to fight terrorism."

But US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey acknowledged last week that IS could not be defeated in Iraq alone.

"Can they be defeated without addressing that part of the organisation that resides in Syria? The answer is no," he said.

Muallem said even air strikes would be insufficient to wipe out the IS, which emerged from Al-Qaeda's former Iraqi affiliate but has since broken ranks with that group.

"We welcome every effort to fight Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State, but the real question is: are air strikes enough to wipe them out? I don't think so," he said.

Any strikes would have to be accompanied by "the drying up for the sources of terrorism, particularly financing and arming, along with proper control of the border and intelligence sharing," he added.

The IS has advanced in Syria, taking territory from both armed opposition groups in northern Aleppo province and from the Syrian army in Raqa province, also in the north.

US strikes targets in northern Iraq

Iraqi Kurds advance on jihadist militants

AFP, Washington, Kirkuk

The United States on Sunday used aircraft and drones to strike targets in northern Iraq to try to rein in Islamic State militants, who have seized a large swath of territory in the region.

"US military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in support of Iraqi security force operations, using attack and remotely-piloted aircraft to conduct two airstrikes in the vicinity of Arbil and Mosul dam," a statement from Florida-based Centcom said, using one of the acronyms by which the Islamic State is known.

"One strike destroyed an ISIL humvee near the Mosul Dam and the other strike destroyed an ISIL armed vehicle near Arbil. All aircraft exited the strike area safely," it said.

Iraqi Kurdish forces, meanwhile, backed by air power retook three villages from jihadist militants northeast of Baghdad yesterday and also held off two assaults elsewhere, officials said.

Militants led by the IS group overran

large chunks of Iraq in a lightning June offensive that swept security forces aside.

But Iraqi federal forces and the autonomous Kurdish region's peshmerga fighters are now fighting to regain ground from the militants on multiple fronts.

Kurdish forces backed by Iraqi air support yesterday retook three villages in the Jalawla area in Diyala province, as well as a main road used by jihadists to transport fighters and supplies, peshmerga members said.

"Jalawla is strategic because it is a gateway to Baghdad," Shirko Merwais, a senior Kurdish political party official in nearby Khanaqin, told AFP.

In the area, Iraqi aircraft are "carrying out air strikes and the peshmerga... are fighting on the ground," he said.

Further north, militants launched two assaults on the Shiite Turkmen-majority town of Tuz Khurmatu, late on Sunday and early yesterday.

Both attacks were beaten back by Kurdish forces supported by Iraqi aircraft, officials said.

Kremlin plans new Ukraine convoy

Border clashes rage

AFP, Donetsk

The Kremlin announced plans yesterday for a second aid convoy into Ukraine, heightening tensions on the eve of crunch talks, while fresh clashes raged along the border and around the main rebel-held city.

A Ukrainian military spokesman said troops were battling a contingent of "10 tanks and two armoured personal carriers" flying rebel flags that had crossed a southern part of the border with Russia and was heading towards the government-held city of Mariupol.

Some 120 kilometres to the north, AFP journalists also witnessed heavy fighting raging to the south of Donetsk, the main rebel bastion, a day after separatist leaders said they had deployed tanks and artillery to the area.

Explosions rang out and smoke rose from towns to the south of the city. Ukraine's military said four soldiers had been killed and 31 wounded in the past 24 hours.

The latest fighting comes as

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian leader Vladimir Putin prepare to meet for the first time in months alongside top EU officials in Minsk today.

There was additional pressure on the talks after the Kremlin said yesterday that it planned to send another controversial aid convoy into east Ukraine "this week".

Russia sent 230 lorries carrying what it claimed was 1,800 tonnes humanitarian aid to the rebel-held city of Lugansk without Red Cross monitors on Friday after accusing Kiev of intentionally delaying the mission.

Kiev condemned the move as a "direct invasion" but the trucks returned to Russia on Saturday without incident.

"We would like to agree on the conditions to send the convoy on the same route with the same participation of Ukrainian border guards and customs officers as soon as possible," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference in Moscow.

INDIA BY-ELECTIONS BJP feels the brunt in Bihar, Karnataka

NDTV ONLINE

Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar have turned their once-famous rivalry into a friendship with very real benefits. Along with the Congress, they have won six of 10 assembly seats that were decided yesterday in by-elections.

Kumar said the result signaled which way the political winds are blowing in the state, which will pick its new government next year.

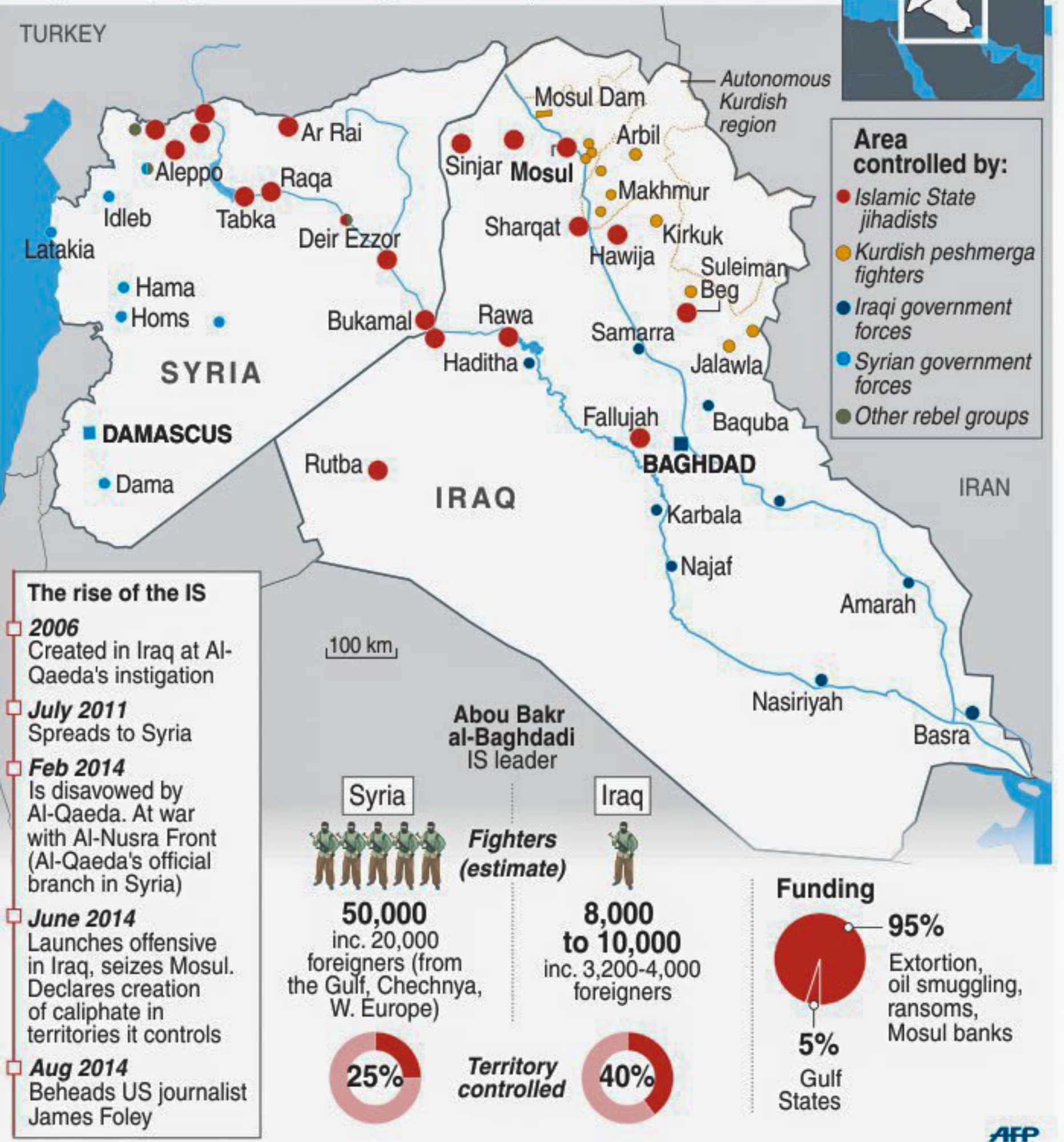
BJP's Shah Nawaz Hussain, a prominent Bihar leader was quick to blame the state leaders, him included. "The result is not as we expected. The state BJP takes responsibility," he said, adding, "We must not compare this with the Lok Sabha elections results."

Meanwhile, Congress received some much-needed good news from Karnataka yesterday, where it won two of the three state assembly seats. The big coup for the Congress has been its appropriation of an important BJP borough - Rural Bellary, the rich and graft-ridden heart of mining in the state.

Though Congress won the state election last year, evicting BJP, it took only nine of the 28 seats in the national election in May.

Islamic State

The jihadist group now controls large areas of Syria and Iraq



Foley's last letter

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The parents of James Foley, the American journalist murdered by Isis, have released a letter written by their son during his captivity.

All letters "Jim" wrote to his family were confiscated by the jihadists in Syria - but last June he asked a fellow hostage, who was about to be released, to commit a letter to memory.

In the dictated message, which his family posted on the Facebook page: Find James Foley, the journalist speaks about how he is coping with and his yearning

"I have had weak and strong days. We are so grateful when of course, yearn for We try to encourage share strength,"

Foley was kidnapped while covering the Tuesday Isis posed a video online showing his killing.

The letter reveals the banalities of captivity; Foley was held with 17 other hostages and the group passed the time by discussing films, sport and trivia and playing games made up of scraps found in their jail cell.

Foley also speaks about how memories of his family are helping him to remain strong.

Foley ends the letter by addressing "Grammy". He writes: "Stay strong because I am going to need your help to reclaim my life."



French Government dissolved

AFP, Paris

France was thrown into fresh crisis yesterday after President Francois Hollande told his prime minister to form a new government, following a high-profile show of insubordination by the country's firebrand economy minister.

The shock move caught France by surprise and opposition figures pointed to a major crisis of confidence at the heart of the deeply unpopular executive, with far-right leader Marine Le Pen even calling for the lower house National Assembly to be dissolved.

A presidency statement said Prime Minister Manuel Valls had offered the resignation of his government and the new line-up would be announced today.

Michael Brown's funeral Father appeals for calm

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Thousands of mourners were expected at the funeral yesterday of Michael Brown, the African American teenager whose death at

the hands of a white police officer set off days of confrontation on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri.

Brown's father, also Michael, appealed at a peace rally on Sunday for a suspension of protests to show proper respect to his son during the burial at a St Louis baptist church.

"All I want is peace while my son is being laid to rest," he said. "Can you please, please, take a day of silence so we can lay our son to rest? Please. It's all I ask."

The violent nightly showdowns between protesters demanding the arrest of the police officer, Darren Wilson, who shot the unarmed 18-



Michael Brown Sr

year-old six times, have given way to more organised and orderly demonstrations. But anger over the racially-charged killing remains intense.

Brown's father was joined on stage at the rally by relatives of other young African American men killed in shootings who shared experiences of their struggle for justice while coping with the loss.

They included the parents of Trayvon Martin, the unarmed teenager shot by a neighbourhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, in Florida two years ago.

Martin's father, Tracy, spoke about broader lessons from the killings such as the importance of education, and the need for fathers to "take back our neighbourhoods" and to teach their children "how to walk and talk in public".

WARPLANE INTERCEPTION Chinese media warn US

AFP, Beijing

China's state-run media warned Washington yesterday that Beijing could treat its surveillance flights as an "act of hostility", after accusations a Chinese fighter jet flew dangerously close to a US military aircraft.

US Rear Admiral John Kirby said Friday the armed Chinese warplane came close to the American P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft on three occasions, at times less than 30 feet away, in what he called a "very dangerous" intercept.

China's defence ministry spokesman Yang Yujun called the allegations "totally groundless" in a statement cited by the official news agency Xinhua.

The incident took place 220 kilometres off China's Hainan island, over an area the US insists is international waters but Beijing regards as part of its territory.

The Global Times -- which is owned by the Communist Party's mouthpiece, the People's Daily, and often takes a nationalist tone -- lashed out in an editorial at US surveillance "in the coastal waters and airspace of China".