

NEWSIN brief

US bans anti-personnel mines

AFP, New York

The United States said Tuesday it was halting the use of anti-personnel mines apart from in the tense No Man's Land between the Koreas, a step closer to compliance with a key global convention. The move brings the United States closer than ever to adhering to the international treaty prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

Abu Qatada walks free

AFP, Amman

A Jordanian court acquitted radical cleric Abu Qatada of terrorism charges and immediately freed him yesterday, ending more than a decade of legal cases against the firebrand preacher. Abu Qatada, -- once described as the right-hand man in Europe of late Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden --, was found not guilty of conspiring to attack tourists in Jordan during millennium celebrations, due to insufficient evidence, officials said.

Sena, BJP row drags on

PTI, Mumbai

In a fresh snub to BJP, the Shiv Sena has said it won't back off from its decision to contest at least 150 seats in the Maharashtra assembly polls. The Sena had submitted a fresh proposal to its alliance partners on Sunday night, keeping 151 assembly seats for itself, giving 130 seats to the BJP and leaving out just seven seats for its junior alliance partners.

Nepal PM free of cancer: Minister

AFP, Kathmandu

Doctors have given a clean bill of health to Nepal's Prime Minister Sushil Koirala, following successful radiotherapy for lung cancer, the country's information minister said yesterday. Koirala, 75, travelled to New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center last week for follow-up consultations after he was diagnosed with cancer in June.

Modi seeks to add fruit juice to Pepsi, Coke

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said he has asked PepsiCo and other soft drink giants to consider adding fruit juice to their sodas to boost the income of local farmers.

Modi said companies such as Coca-Cola and PepsiCo should work with Indian research institutions and the country's farmers to produce the healthier sodas. "I have asked these companies (to examine) if five percent natural fruit juice can be added to their drinks," Modi said after inaugurating an industrial park for food processors in the city of Tumkur in Karnataka. He said the move would hand India's tens of millions of farmers, many of whom struggle to make a profit, a new market for their produce, while also reducing food wastage by processing unsold fruit.

Missed call to women will lead to jail in Bihar

PTI, Patna

Give missed calls to women and cool your heels in jail! CID inspector general Arvind Pandey on Tuesday issued a circular to all district superintendents of police asking them to ensure that police take action in such cases with utmost seriousness. Pandey, however, said that police officials have been told to ignore the matter if missed calls are given once or twice, but crack the whip if they are repeated and with an intention to harass women.

UNSC passes resolution on foreign jihadists

AFP, United Nations

US President Barack Obama yesterday led the UN Security Council in unanimously approving a binding resolution on stemming the flow of foreign jihadists to Iraq and Syria.

The resolution requires all countries to adopt laws that would make it a serious crime for their nationals to join jihadist groups such as Islamic State and Al-Nusra Front.

Obama described the resolution as "historic" at the special session of the Council, only the sixth time in UN history that the council was convening at the level of heads of state.

Obama opened the session by voicing solidarity with France after one of its citizens was kidnapped and beheaded by jihadists in Algeria linked to the Islamic State group.

"We stand with you and the French people as you grieve this terrible loss and as you stand up against terror in defense of liberty," Obama said, turning his gaze towards French President Francois Hollande.

The resolution states that "nations must prevent the movement of terrorist or terrorist groups through their territory and ensure that domestic laws allow for prosecution of those who attempt to do so," he said.

About 15,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries have



joined the ranks of jihadists in Syria, according to US intelligence estimates.

The call for action to stem the flow of foreign fighters is fueled by fears that new terror networks will emerge from the Syria-Iraq front, much in the same way that the September 11, 2001 attacks were linked to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

The resolution falls under Chapter 7 of the UN charter, which means the measures could be enforced by economic sanctions or military force.

Obama appealed to countries to join the US-led coalition against the Islamic State during an address a few hours earlier to the UN General Assembly.

Sanctions on 12 'terrorist' group supporters

Meanwhile, United States yesterday issued financial sanctions against 11 individuals and a foreign entity it designated as "global terrorists", vowing to disrupt the finances of the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda.

The sanctions would see any US assets belonging to those affected frozen, while any transactions with US persons would be prohibited. Those listed worked with a range of organizations -- al-Qaeda and its affiliates; the Islamic State group; Al-Nusra Front; and Jemaah Islamiyah -- "to send financial and material support, and foreign terrorist fighters to Syria and elsewhere," the US Treasury Department said.

Jihadists behead kidnapped Frenchman in Algeria

AFP, Algiers

Jihadists linked to the Islamic State group beheaded a Frenchman abducted in Algeria in a video posted online yesterday, after Paris rejected their demand to halt air strikes in Iraq.

President Francois Hollande condemned the "cruel and cowardly" murder of Herve Gourdel and said it would only strengthen France's resolve to pursue its air war against the Islamic State group.

The 55-year-old was kidnapped on Sunday by Jund al-Khilifa, or "Soldiers of the Caliphate," while hiking in a national park that was once a magnet for tourists but later became a sanctuary for Islamists.

His beheading followed France's rejection of the group's 24-hour ultimatum to halt air raids in Iraq -- part of a US-led campaign against IS.

Hollande vowed France would not be deterred from continuing its military action.

"This aggression only reinforces my determination," he said, speaking on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

He said he would convene a special security meeting today to discuss Gourdel's murder and vowed to hunt down his killers.

The video, entitled "A Message with Blood to the French Government", employs



a similar style to those used in previous videos by IS showing the beheadings of three Western hostages.

It begins with a clip of Hollande at a press conference where he announced strikes against IS in Iraq. The video then shows Gourdel on his knees with his hands behind his back in front of four armed militants with covered-up faces.

The Frenchman briefly expresses his love for his family before one of the jihadists reads a speech in which he denounces the actions of the "French criminal crusaders" against Muslims in Algeria, Mali and Iraq.

The jihadist says the beheading is to "avenge the victims in Algeria... and support the caliphate" proclaimed by IS in Iraq and Syria.

Nigeria claims Boko Haram leader dead

AFP, Abuja

Nigeria's military yesterday claimed for the first time that Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau was dead, as it said troops had killed a lookalike who had been posing as the militant commander.

Defence spokesman Chris Olukolade told reporters in Abuja that a heavily bearded Islamist fighter identified as Mohammed Bashir died during fighting in the town of Konduga, in Borno state.

Bashir had "been acting or posing on videos as the deceased Abubakar Shekau, the eccentric character known as leader of the group", he added. The announcement is the first time the military has said publicly that Shekau was dead after two previous claims by security sources that he had died in July 2009 and in late June 2013.

Fresh airstrikes against Jihadists



Doubts cast over US strike on 'Khorasan'

AFP, Beirut

The US says it has hit a little-known group called "Khorasan" in Syria, but experts and activists argue it actually struck al-Qaeda's affiliate Al-Nusra Front, which fights alongside Syrian rebels.

In announcing its raids in the northern province of Aleppo on Tuesday, Washington described the group it targeted as Khorasan, a cell of al-Qaeda veterans planning attacks against the West.

But experts and activists cast doubt on the distinction between Khorasan and Al-Nusra Front, which is al-Qaeda's Syrian branch.

"In Syria, no one had ever heard talk of Khorasan until the US media brought it up," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"Rebels, activists and the whole world knows that these positions (hit Tuesday) were al-Nusra positions, and the fighters killed were Al-Nusra fighters," added Abdel Rahman, who has tracked the Syrian conflict since it erupted in 2011.

AP first reported on 13 September that US intelligence officials had identified the Khorasan Group as a serious threat, in part because the group had been working with bomb makers to test new explosive devices that could go undetected by airport security.

Claims of a distinction are lost of many of Syria's rebels, who have also often rejected the world community's designation of Al-Nusra as a "terrorist" group. When Washington added Al-Nusra to its list of "terrorist" organisations, even the internationally-backed Syrian opposition National Coalition criticised the decision.

The Coalition's support for the group cooled after Al-Nusra officially pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri and was named the group's official Syrian branch.

But on the ground, almost all rebel groups have been willing to cooperate with Al-Nusra, seeing them as distinct from the Islamic State group (IS), which espouses transnational goals and includes many non-Syrians among its ranks.

In a statement, the rebel Supreme Military Command affiliated with the opposition National Coalition emphasised "the need to avoid targeting moderate national and Islamic forces".

And targeting Al-Nusra could even prove controversial within Washington's anti-jihadist alliance. Some key members are believed to maintain channels of communication with Al-Nusra, including Qatar, which has helped negotiate the release of prisoners held by the group.

On Tuesday, Washington made clear that, unlike the strikes against IS, none of its allies participated in the raids against al-Qaeda targets.

FIGHT AGAINST IS

'3,000 European jihadis' now in Syria, Iraq

AFP, Brussels

The number of Europeans joining Islamist fighters in Syria and Iraq has jumped by a third to around 3,000 in a few months, the EU counter-terrorism chief said Tuesday. The European fighters, he said, come mainly from France, Britain, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark but a few come from Spain, Italy, Ireland and now Austria.

Aussie police shoot dead 'terror suspect'

AFP, Sydney

Police in Melbourne have shot dead a "known terror suspect" who stabbed two officers, a day after the Islamic State group called for Muslims to indiscriminately kill Australians, officials said yesterday. It came as tougher counter-terrorism laws were introduced to Australia's parliament on Wednesday to combat the threat of foreign fighters, with a proposal to criminalise travel to known terror hotspots without a legitimate reason.

Dutch F-16s to join campaign

AFP, The Hague

Six Dutch F-16 fighter bombers are to join the US-led air campaign against the Islamic State group in Iraq, Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher announced yesterday. Apart from the F-16s, the Netherlands will also deploy 250 military personnel and 130 trainers for the Iraqi military.

US raids kill top Qaeda operative in Syria

AFP, Beirut

US strikes have killed a senior operative from al-Qaeda's Syrian branch in Aleppo province, activists said yesterday. Abu Yusef al-Turki was among 50 militants killed in strikes on Tuesday against what the US called an al-Qaeda cell that had been planning attacks on Western interests.

Change your course, we'll lift sanctions

Obama tells Russia

AFP, United Nations

US President Barack Obama yesterday slammed Russia's "aggression" in Ukraine but offered to lift sanctions against Moscow if it threw its weight behind an unravelling peace deal with Kiev.

The outstretched hand to Moscow came a day after pro-Russian guerrillas brushed off Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's limited self-rule offer and announced plans to set up their own parliaments in self-organised November 2 polls.

The autonomy offer was at the heart of the pro-Western leader's attempts to quell a revolt that has devastated the ex-Soviet nation's economy and revived a Cold War-era mistrust between Moscow and the West.

A tough-talking Obama told a special UN General Assembly session in New York that Russia was on the wrong side of history in Ukraine. But he also stressed that a ceasefire deal agreed earlier this month offered an opening toward diplomacy and peace.

"Russian aggression in Europe recalls the days when large nations trampled small ones in pursuit of territorial ambition," Obama told the General Assembly with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in attendance.

"We will impose a cost on Russia for aggression."

But if Moscow "changes course", he added, "then we will lift our sanctions and welcome Russia's role in addressing common challenges".

Poroshenko himself has issued no comment since seeing his high-stakes bid to resolve a crisis that has killed more than 3,200 people so openly challenged just days after it was unveiled.

'Not in my name'

Muslims stand up to IS with online campaign

AFP, Paris

As Islamic State extremists call for random murders throughout Europe in Allah's name, the continent's Muslims are hitting back with mass peace demonstrations and a Twitter campaign to say "not in my name".

From Norway in the far north to Germany and France, Muslims have taken to the streets to denounce the IS jihadists controlling large areas of Iraq and Syria who they say have hijacked their religion and terminology to spread hate and breed violence.

The IS group are "terrorists and murderers who drag Islam into the dirt and bring hatred and suffering to the people, including to their own fellow Muslims, in Syria, in Iraq and elsewhere," said Aiman Mazyek, chairman of Germany's central council of Muslims.

Along with other Muslim groups, Mazyek's council organised last week a day of prayers and rallies across Germany, which is home to around four million Muslims, mainly with Turkish roots.

Similar marches have taken place in Norway and Denmark under the banner "say no to the (non) Islamic State."

Other Muslims have taken to social media to combat the Islamic State group, which itself has used Twitter effectively to recruit potential recruits.



The London-based Active Change Foundation has started a hashtag campaign #notinmyname that has spread rapidly across Twitter.

"Tell the world that ISIS are the real enemies of Islam. It's nothing to do with us," says the group on its website, using an alternative name for IS, alongside videos of young Muslims holding placards with the slogan.

"Tell ISIS that they can't murder in your name." As well as standing up against the horrors of IS, Muslim groups across Europe are taking measures to try to prevent their youth -- misguided they say -- from travelling to Syria and Iraq in their thousands to wage jihad.

In Sweden for example, a volunteer group has set up an Internet and telephone hotline for people to alert authorities if they suspect a friend or relative has been radicalised.

French Muslims issued a clarion call in a "Paris appeal" for young people "not to get their battles mixed up."

"The real jihad is not in Syria or Iraq, it is in France: it's the battle for integration, for social success, to live together," said Anouar Kbibech, president of a group representing 550 mosques.

Clean energy goals set

REUTERS, New York

A United Nations summit on climate change agreed on Tuesday to widen the use of renewable energy and raise billions of dollars in aid for developing countries in an effort to increase the prospects for a wide-ranging deal to slow global warming.

The one-day summit, hosted by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, set goals to halt losses of tropical forests by 2030, improve food production and hike the share of electric vehicles in cities to 30 percent of new vehicle sales by 2030.

The non-binding initiatives were set by various coalitions of governments, multinational companies, cities, financial groups, investors, environmental organizations and other groups.

The targets are meant to help prepare a 200-nation summit in Paris in late 2015 to finalise a deal to slow rising greenhouse gas emissions. Until now, work has been slow with many countries more focussed on improving economic growth and creating jobs.

Governments and investors said they would raise more than \$200 billion (122 billion pounds) in climate financing by the end of 2015, including \$30 billion in green bonds by

commercial banks and \$100 billion from a group of development banks.

"This will serve as a catalyst in finalising a universal and meaningful agreement at Paris on climate change in 2015," Ban said of the cash.

The United Nations said in a statement that pledges of financial support would give a "significant boost" to a promise by rich nations in 2009 to raise \$100 billion a year by 2020 from all sources to help poor countries shift to



renewable energy and adapt to heat-waves, droughts and rising seas.

Separately, an alliance of about 30 countries including the United States and a coalition of multinational companies set a goal of halving losses of forests by 2020 and halting losses by 2030. If fully implemented, this would save off between 4.5 billion and 8.8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year, equivalent to emissions by all the world's one billion cars.

Trees soak up carbon dioxide from the air as they grow and release it when they die. Burning of forests from the

Amazon to the Congo, mainly to make way for farmland, accounts for up to a fifth of all greenhouse gases generated by human sources.

Companies including Walmart, Unilever, Wilmar International, General Mills, Asia Pulp and Paper and Nestle, many non-governmental organizations and indigenous peoples' groups signed up for the plan.

The declaration is backed by more than \$1 billion from countries including Britain, Germany and Norway. Norway said it would provide up to \$300 million to Peru and \$150 million to Liberia.

"The actions agreed today will reduce poverty, enhance food security, improve the rule of law, secure the rights of indigenous peoples and benefit communities around the world," Ban said.

Among initiatives to curb the use of fossil fuel, one project would raise the share of renewable energy used in power generation in 19 countries in eastern and southern Africa to 40 percent by 2030 from 10 percent.

Another alliance of major nations and energy groups including ENI of Italy and Southwestern Energy in the United States signed up to do more to curb emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

PHOTO: AFP