

NEWSIN brief

WHO reduces Ebola death toll to 4,818

The World Health Organization on Wednesday reduced its Ebola data, showing a smaller death toll in eight countries than earlier indicated as some cases recorded previously turned out to have arisen from other factors.

Blast on train kills two Egypt cops

Two Egyptian policemen were killed when a bomb exploded inside a train carriage north of Cairo on Wednesday, police officials said.

Israel tightens security after car attack

Israel stepped up security along the Jerusalem light rail tracks yesterday after a deadly Palestinian car attack targeted passengers waiting at a station for the second time in a fortnight.

AC/DC member charged with murder plot

The drummer with legendary rock band AC/DC, Phil Rudd, was accused yesterday of trying to hire a hitman to kill two men after police raided his luxury New Zealand home.



A member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India sits inside a cage during a protest outside a KFC outlet in Mumbai, yesterday. PETA staged the demonstration to protest against alleged cruel slaughtering methods to kill chicken.

Al-Qaeda training Indian militants for big attacks

Intel officials say the militants are teaming up with local outfit

Decrypted communications between Indian Mujahideen (IM) and al-Qaeda and testimony from suspects have triggered alarm among intelligence officials in New Delhi: the groups appear to be working together to launch major attacks in the region.

The officials said that plots they had uncovered included the kidnaping of foreigners and turning India into a 'Syria and Iraq where violence is continuously happening'.

Allegiances between Islamist militant groups can be murky and fleeting, and providing concrete proof of operational ties is notoriously difficult.

But Indian security agencies said evidence they had gathered pointed to growing ties between al-Qaeda and IM, a home-grown movement hitherto known for low-level attacks on local targets.

Weeks after al-Qaeda announced the formation of a South Asia wing to strike across the subcontinent, agencies said they had discovered IM members were training with al-Qaeda and other groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan for major attacks.

That increases the risk of a more dangerous form of militancy in the world's biggest democracy, which has been largely spared the kind of violence that regularly rocks its neighbour Pakistan and, beyond it, Afghanistan.

Security officials cite last Sunday's deadly suicide bombing on the Pakistani side of a border crossing with India, and a terror alert on Tuesday at two eastern ports that forced the Indian navy to withdraw two ships, as evidence that militant coordination and activity are on the rise.

"The thing we are looking for is how al-Qaeda/ISIS tie up with local groups, especially as the drawdown takes place in Afghanistan," said Sharad Kumar, head of the NIA (National Investigation Agency), the country's main counter-terrorism arm.

Some members of IM are already fighting alongside al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, according to an Indian government chargesheet against 11 suspected members of the group alleged to have plotted attacks in India.

The worry is that more battle hardened fighters could now turn their sights on their homeland. Others have enlisted with al-Qaeda to try to carry out kidnappings of Jews in India and Nepal to secure the release of Pakistani Aafia Siddiqui, a neuroscientist jailed for 86 years in the United States for attempting to kill US soldiers in Afghanistan.

Siddiqui is a cause celebre among global militant groups, including Islamic State, which proposed swapping her for American journalist James Foley before executing him when its demands were not met.

IM has also been urged by al-Qaida to open a base in Myanmar to avenge attacks on Rohingya Muslims, said the chargesheet prepared by the NIA, which has gathered hundreds of pieces of evidence of internet conversations and meetings between militants in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The internet chats, which the United States helped Indian investigators to decipher, reveal tensions between IM and Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency, which India says has nurtured the group with finance and equipment. Pakistani officials deny they have links with the militants.

Nato will not abandon Afghanistan

Vows its chief as mission ends

Nato's new chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday pledged that Afghanistan would not be abandoned when the alliance's combat mission ends next month after 13 years of fighting against resilient Taliban insurgents.

Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will finish operations at the end of the year and be replaced by a far smaller training and support mission named 'Resolute Support'.

But Afghanistan's stability could be at risk without international troops on the battlefield as the country's security forces endure huge casualties in the bloody struggle to thwart the Taliban.

"Next year, we will open a new chapter. The future of Afghanistan will be in Afghan hands, but our support will continue," Secretary General Stoltenberg said on his first visit to Kabul since taking office last month.

ISAF troop numbers peaked at 130,000 in 2010, but now stand at less than 34,000.

Only about 12,500 soldiers, most of them from the United States, will remain into 2015 to continue training the Afghan forces, who have already taken over most of the fighting.

Tourists land in Indian jail after balloon drifts

Two foreign tourists on holiday in India unwittingly landed in jail this week after strong winds blew their hot air balloon off course.

The two sisters from the West Indies were enjoying a ride over the desert in the western state of Rajasthan on Tuesday when the balloon's pilot lost control, forcing him to make an emergency landing.

Indian media said the balloon landed in the prison yard, to the consternation of officers.

"When the operator saw that they were sailing over the Anasagar Lake, he got alarmed and tried to control the movement of the balloon," the Indian Express quoted local police inspector Hanuman Vishnoi as saying.

"The nearest landing was the police lines and even though he steered towards it, the strong winds made the balloon travel further up to Ajmer jail."

Authorities have responded by cancelling balloon rides over the area, Indian media reported.

Pak cop uses axe to kill blasphemy accused

A Pakistani policeman used an axe to kill a man arrested for allegedly committing blasphemy, officials said yesterday, days after an enraged mob murdered a Christian couple accused of the same crime.

Tufail Haider, a 50-year-old from the minority Shia sect of Islam, was arrested for allegedly making derogatory remarks toward the companions of the Prophet Mohammed and brought to the Civil Lines police station in the eastern city of Gujrat on Wednesday.

"Tufail was kept in the lock-up but he continued uttering derogatory remarks and hurled abuse at policemen. He looked like a malang (wandering preacher) and seemed mentally imbalanced," duty officer Ali Raza told AFP.

"Assistant Sub-Inspector Faraz Naveed, 36, became very angry on hearing the derogatory remarks and he killed the detainee with an axe in the lock up," he added.

The US prison that gave birth to ISIS

In March 2009, in a wind-swept sliver of Iraq, a sense of uncertainty befell the southern town of Gamma, home to one of the Iraq War's most notorious prisons. The sprawling detention center called Camp Bucca, which had detained some of the Iraq War's most radical jihadists along the Kuwait border, had just freed hundreds of inhabitants. Families rejoiced, anxiously awaiting their sons, brothers and fathers who had been lost to Bucca for years. But a local official fretted.

In all, nine members of the Islamic State's top command did time at Bucca, according to the terrorist analyst organization Soufan Group. Apart from Baghdadi, the ISIS caliph, who spent five years there, the leader's number two, Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, as well as senior military leader Haji Bakr, (now deceased), and leader of foreign fighters Abu Qasim were incarcerated there. Though it's likely the men were extremists when they entered Bucca, it's certain they were when they left.

"Before their detention, al-Baghdadi and others were violent radicals, intent on attacking America," wrote military veteran Andrew Thompson and academic Jeremi Suri in the New York Times this month. "Their time in prison deepened their extremism and gave them opportunities to broaden their following. The prisons became virtual terrorist universities: the hardened radicals were the professors, the other detainees were the students, and the prison authorities played the role of absent custodian."

Many of the inmates were guilty of attacking American soldiers. But many more were not; "simply being a 'suspicious looking' military-aged male in the vicinity of an attack was enough to land one behind bars," according to the Times opinion piece. It was "an appalling miscarriage of justice," he added.

That this subdued insurgency eventually caught fire isn't much of a surprise. The unique setting at Bucca, which thrust together Saddam Hussein's Baathist secularists and Islamic fundamentalists, set the stage for something perhaps worse: collaboration. At the prison, the two seemingly incongruous groups joined to form a union "more than a marriage of convenience", Soufan reported.

Soufan found each group offered the other something it lacked. In the ex-Baathists, jihadists found organizational skills and military discipline. In the jihadists, ex-Baathists found purpose. "In Bucca, the math changed as ideologists adopted military and bureaucratic traits and as bureaucrats became violent extremists," the Soufan report said.

From the ashes of what former inmates called an "al-Qaeda school," rose the Islamic State. Indeed, when those inhabitants freed in 2009 returned to Baghdad, the Post reported, they spoke of two things: their conversion to radicalism — and revenge.



India set to expand cabinet

Indian PM Narendra Modi is set to expand his cabinet over the weekend, five months after he led his BJP party to a landslide win in media reported yesterday.

Forty-five MPs, including seven women, from Modi's party and their allies were sworn in as ministers in May. More than six ministers are holding more than one portfolio, including Arun Jaitley, who is charge of both the key ministries of finance and defence.

Media reports say Modi may include as many as 10 new ministers. The reports say that the chief minister of the BJP-ruled state of Goa, Manohar Parrikar, could be chosen as the new defence minister.

The speculation was triggered after Parrikar cancelled a meeting with his ministers in Goa and travelled to Delhi to meet Modi on Wednesday.

However, after meeting the prime minister, Parrikar said he had discussed "issues of Goa", and that he continues as the chief minister.

Among other MPs who are likely to be inducted as new ministers are Jayant Sinha, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Anurag Thakur, reports say.

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বাংলাদেশ রাষ্ট্রীয় চিকিৎসা অনুষদ. নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি. Details regarding recruitment for various positions including medical officers and staff.

Tourists land in Indian jail after balloon drifts. Pak cop uses axe to kill blasphemy accused. News snippets from AFP, New Delhi and Lahore.