



'Global warming is killing the planet'

Pope Francis will this week warn that global warming threatens the future of the planet and say there is both an urgent need and moral imperative to reduce fossil fuel consumption, Vatican sources said yesterday.

The papal intervention, seen as a potential game-changer by Green groups, comes six months before international leaders gather in Paris to try and seal a global deal on steps to reduce carbon emissions.

ISIS suffers 'biggest setback'

Kurds take Syria border town near Turkey; Afghan Taliban warn ISIS not to interfere

Kurdish fighters yesterday seized control of a key border town from the Islamic State group, cutting a major supply line in the biggest setback yet for the jihadists in Syria.

"the most significant loss for ISIS in Syria yet," said Aymenn al-Tamimi, an expert at the Middle East Forum research group.

The Kurdish forces and Syrian rebel allies launched a two-pronged attack

people had sought refuge across the border between June 3 and 15.

Analysts said the loss of the town would be a major blow to ISIS morale, just as the group commemorates the first anniversary of the

Daesh, has never formally acknowledged having a presence in Afghanistan but fears are growing that the group is making inroads in the country.

In a letter addressed to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Taliban insisted that "jihad (holy war) against the Americans and their allies must be conducted under one flag and one leadership".

"The Islamic Emirate (Taliban) does not consider the multiplicity of jihadi ranks beneficial either for jihad or for Muslims," said the letter signed by the Taliban deputy leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor.

"Your decisions taken from a distance will result in (the ISIS) losing support of religious scholars, mujahideen... and in order to defend its achievements the Islamic Emirate will be forced to react," it added.

The letter, published on the Taliban website in Pashto, Urdu, Arabic and Dari, did not elaborate on its threat.

The statement demonstrates a growing disquiet within the Taliban about the creeping influence and popularity of ISIS within insurgent ranks, analysts say.



Syrian children arrive at the Akcakale crossing gate between Turkey and Syria; right, a Kurdish fighter unfurls their flag at the same place after defeating ISIS.



From across the frontier in Turkey, the Kurds and allied Syrian rebels could be seen raising their banners in place of the black ISIS flag and taking up positions at the Tal Abyad border post.

Fighters with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia waved their yellow banner as Turkish troops looked on from the other side of the frontier.

The capture of Tal Abyad, used by ISIS as a gateway from Turkey to its de facto capital Raqqa city, was "the biggest setback to ISIS since it announced its caliphate one year ago," said Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.

The frontier town was a key conduit for foreign fighters and supplies into ISIS-held territory in Syria and for exports of black market oil from jihadist-held fields in eastern Syria, analysts say.

on Tal Abyad on June 11, backed by air strikes by the US-led coalition fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

The Observatory and Kurdish sources said they had seized full control of the town by early Tuesday.

The fighting had sent thousands of terrified residents fleeing into Turkey, with the UN refugee agency saying Tuesday that some 23,000

declaration last year of its self-styled Islamic "caliphate".

Meanwhile, the Taliban yesterday warned the leader of the Islamic State group against waging a parallel insurgency in Afghanistan, after a string of defections and reported clashes with militants loyal to ISIS.

The Middle Eastern group, also known by its Arabic acronym

UN failing to tackle today's challenges

Key report builds case for change at the world body

AGENCIES



Madeleine Albright

The United Nations and other global institutions aren't equipped to tackle today's global challenges ranging from massive violence in fragile states to runaway climate change and global economic shocks, a high-level commission said in a report released yesterday.

The commission on global security, justice and governance, issued a series of proposals aimed at reforming the UN, strengthening cooperation at all levels of society to deal with these challenges, and putting greater focus on preventing conflicts and restoring peace to countries emerging from violence.

"World leaders must grapple with new ways to approach 21st century threats posed by climate change, conflict and cross-border economic shocks," said former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright, who co-chaired the commission. "A failure to adapt effectively risks prolonging and deepening these global crises."

The release of the 158-page report coincides with the 70th anniversary of the UN.

The report also taps into the latest, more adamant calls for UN reform, a much-debated topic that has repeatedly failed to gain traction among the five permanent Security Council members. It calls for expanding the Security Council, restricting veto use and creating new forum to address climate change, cybersecurity, the new development goals and peacebuilding.

Egypt Court confirms Morsi death sentence

AFRP, Cairo

An Egyptian court yesterday upheld a death sentence against ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi for plotting jailbreaks and attacks on police during the 2011 uprising.

The court had initially sentenced Morsi and more than 100 other defendants to death last month.

Tuesday's ruling comes after the court consulted Egypt's grand mufti, the government interpreter of Islamic law who plays an advisory role.

Earlier on Tuesday, the same court sentenced Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, to life in prison on charges of spying for the Palestinian Hamas movement, Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah,



and Iran.

Yesterday's verdicts can be appealed. Then army chief and now President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ousted Morsi on July 3, 2013, and since then has overseen a sweeping crackdown against his supporters.

The crackdown has left hundreds of Islamists dead and thousands jailed.

Hundreds have been sentenced to death after speedy mass trials described by the United Nations as "unprecedented in recent history".

In the jailbreak trial, exiled Egyptian-born cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who commands huge influence through his appearances on Al-Jazeera television from his base in Qatar, was also condemned to death in absentia.

Why you let Bashir go?

S Africa court gives govt seven days to explain

AFP, Johannesburg

The South African government has a week to explain to judges why it defied a court order barring the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir from leaving the country.

Bashir flew out of South Africa on Monday, before the end of the African leaders summit, despite an earlier ruling blocking him from leaving.

A court Monday ordered the government to disclose why he was allowed to leave, in a ruling criticised the authorities action as not consistent with the constitution.

Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur, arrived in South Africa on Saturday to attend the African Union summit, prompting a court bid by a rights group to have him arrested.

The South African government said in a statement they would investigate the cir-

cumstance surrounding Bashir's departure through a military base.

"We will also comply with the court order relating to submission of an affidavit outlining these circumstances," it said in a statement.

South Africa is a signatory of The Hague-based ICC and has come under global criticism for failing to arrest Bashir, who has evaded justice since his indictment in 1999.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon said the arrest warrant was "a matter I take extremely seriously and the authority of the ICC must be respected."

The ICC indictments relate to the western Sudanese region of Darfur, which erupted into conflict in 2003 when black insurgents rose up against Bashir's Arab-dominated government, complaining of marginalisation.

Since his indictment, Bashir has mostly travelled to countries that have not joined the ICC.



LALIT MODI VISA ROW Sushma offered to quit: report

PTI, New Delhi

India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj offered to resign almost a week before the controversy broke out over her help to former IPL commissioner Lalit Modi in getting travel documents on "humanitarian ground", but her offer was rejected on the intervention of the RSS, informed sources said.

The sources said the news channel that on Sunday read out e-mails of a British MP concerning travel documents for Modi, had sent an e-mail to Sushma Swaraj almost a week before, seeking her response on the issue.

Soon after that she met Narendra Modi and informed him of the matter in detail, a highly placed source told IANS.

Sources said a meeting of senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh functionaries was convened a day later by Modi to discuss the matter and to chalk out the future strategy.

They said at the meeting Sushma Swaraj clarified her stand on the issue and said she was ready to resign as she did not want the government to face any embarrassment. But RSS functionaries stopped her, saying she has done nothing wrong, the sources added.

Swaraj is in the centre of a controversy for helping Lalit Modi, who is facing charges of misappropriation of funds in IPL and currently staying in London, get documents to travel to Portugal for his wife's medical treatment.

She had reasoned that she had helped him on "humanitarian" grounds.



Italian police officers yesterday carry away a migrant from the Italian city of Ventimiglia near the Italian-French border. Inset, Cops surround a family to remove them from the border area on the Italian side. Italy yesterday warned that EU solidarity is at stake if the 28-nation bloc fails to reach a deal on sharing the burden of the Mediterranean migrant crisis, ahead of an emergency EU meeting.

PHOTO: AFP

Jeb Bush: 'I will run to win'

AFP, Miami

Jeb Bush jumped headlong into the US presidential race Monday, insisting "America deserves better" after eight years of Barack Obama, as the Republican seeks to win over voters skeptical of his political pedigree.

Following a six-month pre-candidacy exploration, Bush made his formal announcement at Miami Dade College, a diverse university chosen to signal that he aims to run an inclusive 2016 campaign.

"I have decided. I am a candidate for president of the United States," he said.

While he is the son and brother of two former presidents, Bush highlighted his own political vision and his two terms as governor of Florida.

"We made Florida number one in job creation and number one in small business creation," Bush said, boasting that he slashed taxes by \$19 billion.

Bush also stressed he would campaign everywhere and face the issues, rather than rely on his record from a decade ago and his family name as he seeks the nomination now sought by 11 Republicans.

"It's nobody's turn. It's everybody's test -- and it's wide open," he said.

"I will take nothing and no one for granted. I will run with heart. I will run to win."

Bush, 62, has been running a de facto campaign for months, raising millions of dollars and boosting his international profile with a trip last week to Europe.

Hillary Clinton is the frontrunner on the Democratic side, with no current close competition.

Nationally, Bush is bunched at the top of most Republican polls, but he is not the dominant figure many had expected. He finished a dispiriting seventh last month in an Iowa poll, but dismisses his struggles to break free of the pack.



'N Korea hit by worst drought'

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has been hit by its worst drought in a century, state media said yesterday, sparking fears of worsening food shortages in the impoverished communist country.

The North's main rice-growing provinces -- South Hwanghae, North Hwanghae, South Pyongan and South Hamgyong -- have been badly damaged by a severe drought, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Last week the South's unification ministry said the North's crop production could fall by as much as 20 percent from last year if the shortage of rainfall lasts until early July.

US kills top al-Qaeda leader

AGENCIES

Al-Qaeda has confirmed that its second-in-command, the chief of its powerful Yemeni branch, was killed in a US drone strike, in the heaviest blow to the jihadist network since the death of Osama bin Laden.

Already struggling with the rise of rival jihadists from the Islamic State group, al-Qaeda has suffered a series of setbacks in recent months with several commanders reported killed.

In a video statement, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) confirmed that Nasir al-Wuhayshi was dead.

Wuhayshi "was killed in a US drone attack that targeted him along with two other mujahideen," who were also killed, said the statement read by prominent al-Qaeda militant Khaled Omar Batarfi and dated June 15.

If Nasir al-Wuhayshi is killed—a claim that US officials are so far not disputing—his death would be a significant blow to the already fragile al-Qaeda terrorist organisation. And it would be the second

major hit in a matter of days on key al-Qaeda leaders, following a series of US airstrikes over the weekend in Libya that killed another notorious jihadist, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, reported The Daily Beast.

AQAP -- which was behind several plots against Western targets including the deadly attack on French magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris earlier this year -- said it had named its military chief Qassem al-Rimi as its new leader.

US officials were earlier reported to have been reviewing intelligence to confirm that Wuhayshi was killed in a CIA drone strike on June 9.

A local Yemeni official had told AFP that Wuhayshi was believed to have been killed in the raid in al-Qaeda-held Mukalla, in southeastern Yemen.

Another Yemeni official told AFP last week that a drone had fired four missiles at three al-Qaeda militants, including an unnamed "leading figure", near Mukalla port, killing them on the spot.



NEWSIN brief

18 dead, 98 hurt in Tunisia train crash

AFP, Tabika

At least 18 people were killed and 98 injured yesterday when a train hit a lorry and derailed at a level crossing in one of Tunisia's worst railway disasters, officials said. Most of the dead were passengers on the morning rush hour train which hit the lorry in the village of Tabika, the

Rebel rocket fire kills 34 in Syria's Aleppo

AFP, Beirut

Rebel rocket fire killed at least 34 civilians in Aleppo in one of the bloodiest days of the conflict for government-held areas of Syria's second city, a monitoring group said yesterday. Twelve children were among the dead as Islamist rebel factions pounded western neighbourhoods of the city with more than 300 rock-

Pakistan executes seven prisoners

AFP, Multan

Pakistan yesterday hanged seven prisoners, bringing the total number put to death since executions resumed last December to 160, officials said. All of those executed had been convicted of murder. Executions in Pakistan resumed in December, ending a six-year moratorium, after Taliban militants gunned down 154 people, most of them children, at a school in

UN: 250,000 children starving in S Sudan

AFP, Juba

A quarter of a million children face starvation in war-torn South Sudan, with an end to the 18-month conflict as distant as ever, the expelled UN aid chief warned yesterday. Civil war began in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings across the country that has split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country

China has four million millionaires: survey

AFP, Beijing

China had four million millionaire households in 2014, the second-highest in the world after the United States, as the country's stock market boom boosted private wealth, an independent survey showed yesterday. The United States had seven million millionaire households last year, the most in the world. Japan took third place with one million,