

NEWSIN brief

Israeli air strike on Syrian town kills 5

AFP, Beirut

An Israeli air strike on a government-held village on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights ceasefire line killed five pro-regime Hezbollah forces yesterday, a monitoring group said. Lebanon's Hezbollah is fighting along Syrian government since the uprising began in 2011.

One dead as migrants storm Eurotunnel

AFP, Calais

One Sudanese origin man died yesterday as overwhelmed authorities fought off at least 1,500 desperate attempts by migrants to enter England through the Channel Tunnel. Attempts to penetrate the 650-hectare Eurotunnel site have spiked in recent days, with migrants trying several times a night to outfox hopelessly outnumbered security officials and police.

France invites Rouhani to warm up ties

AFP, Tehran

France sought to revive its relations with Iran yesterday, extending an invitation to President Hassan Rouhani to visit Paris in November. The offer came in a letter delivered to Rouhani by French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who is in Tehran on a short trip aimed at kickstarting ties between the countries after years of strain.

Rajiv Gandhi Killing: SC refutes govt's petition

TNN, New Delhi

The Supreme Court yesterday rejected the central government's curative petition and upheld commutation of the death sentence to life imprisonment of three convicts in former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination case, TV channels reported. On February 18, 2014, the court had commuted the death sentence of Santhan, Murugan and Perarivalan to life imprisonment.

Flash floods in Gujarat kill 26

AFP, Ahmedabad

Flash floods triggered by torrential monsoon rain have killed at least 26 people in a west Indian state in the past 48 hours, authorities said yesterday. The rain and high winds have also cut power and communications across the north of Gujarat state, raising concerns that villagers may be stranded.

Greece PM hints at early election

AFP, Athens

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras yesterday said he would hold early elections if hardliners in his party continued to resist an unpopular new bailout deal that promised debt relief. "If we do not have a parliament majority I will be forced, we will be forced to hold elections," Tsipras said in a two-hour interview with Sto Kokkino radio.



Israeli settlers scuffle with Israeli security forces as the demolition started of the so-called Dreinoff buildings under an Israeli High Court ruling in the settlement of Beit El, north of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

A 'shocking disregard for lives'

Amnesty accuses Israel of war crimes during Gaza war's 'Black Friday'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Amnesty International has accused Israeli forces of war crimes during a day of "carnage" in the Gaza Strip that has been named Black Friday.

The group's report on alleged atrocities in Rafah during last year's conflict with Hamas claims Israeli forces killed at least 135 Palestinian civilians, including 75 children, following the capture of a soldier.

Lieutenant Hadar Goldin, 23, was with a unit searching for tunnels between Gaza and Israel when a fight started with militants and he disappeared on 1 August 2014.

Philip Luther, director of Amnesty International's Middle East programme, claimed that the "relentless and massive bombardment" that ensured in residential areas of Rafah was a direct response to the capture and displayed a "shocking disregard for civilian lives".

"They carried out a series of disproportionate or otherwise indiscriminate attacks, which they have completely failed

to investigate independently," he added.

The report, 'Black Friday': Carnage in Rafah, was compiled with Goldsmiths University's London-based researchers Forensic Architecture and covers incidents over four days starting on 1 August, when a ceasefire broke down.



Using interviews, video footage, photographs and other evidence the researchers pieced together a timeline of events concluding that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) "Hannibal Directive" had been enacted.

Under the directive, Israeli forces can respond to the capture of a soldier with intense firepower which some

analysts have claimed aim to kill the soldier rather than let them fall alive into enemy hands.

Amnesty's report found that civilians had returned to their homes in Rafah believing they were safe during an agreed ceasefire on the day when bombardment "began without warning", with masses of people on the streets.

"Eyewitness accounts described horrifying scenes of chaos and panic as an inferno of fire from F-16 jets, drones, helicopters and artillery rained down on the streets, striking civilians on foot or in cars, as well as ambulances and other vehicles evacuating the wounded," a spokesperson said.

In one of the deadliest incidents, researchers and military experts told Amnesty that two one-tonne bombs – the largest in Israel's air force arsenal – were dropped on a single-storey building in al-Tannur in eastern Rafah.

Amnesty International said the investigation revealed "compelling evidence yet of serious violations of international humanitarian law" and

Israel okays 300 more settler homes

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday approved the "immediate" construction of 300 settler homes in the occupied West Bank as his government came under pressure from right-wing Jewish groups.

A senior Palestine Liberation Organisation official denounced the plans to build new homes as "war crimes" and accused Israel of sabotaging peace efforts.

West Bank settlements are major impediments to peace negotiations with the Palestinians, who see the land as part of a future independent state, and Western nations have called on Israel to halt such projects.

The decision comes amid already strained relations between Israel and the United States, particularly over the recent nuclear deal with Iran, but Netanyahu is also under pressure to hold on to his one-seat majority in parliament.

"After consultations in the prime minister's office, the immediate construction of 300 homes in Beit El has been authorised," Netanyahu's office said, adding that planning for another 504 homes in annexed east Jerusalem had also been approved.

According to the statement, the 300 units had been promised three years ago following the demolition of other homes in the Beit El settlement.

Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are considered illegal under international law, though not by the Israeli government.



Pak cops kill Laskhar-e-Jhangvi chief

AFP, Lahore

The leader of an anti-Shia group behind some of Pakistan's worst sectarian atrocities was killed in a shootout with police early yesterday along with 13 other militants, authorities said.

Malik Ishaq was shot dead along with fellow Laskhar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militants, including senior commanders, in the eastern province of Punjab.

LeJ, long seen as close to al-Qaeda and more recently accused of developing links with the Islamic State group, has a reputation as one of Pakistan's most ruthless militant groups.

The shootout appears to have wiped out much of the top leadership of LeJ, a driving force in a rising tide of violence targeting Shia Muslims, who make up around 20 percent of Pakistan's 200 million majority Sunni Muslim population.

As well as numerous sectarian atrocities, LeJ was also blamed for the 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in the eastern city of Lahore.

Ishaq, who had been in and out of police custody in recent years, was arrested on Saturday and was being moved when loyalists attacked the convoy in Muzaffargarh, a senior police official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"The police retaliated and in the encounter Ishaq, his two sons and 11 others were killed, while six policemen were injured," he said.

'ISIS preparing to attack India'

PTI, Washington

The ISIS is preparing to attack India to provoke an Armageddon-like confrontation with the US, according to an internal recruitment document of the feared group which also seeks to unite the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban into a single army of terror.

An investigative story published on Tuesday by the USA Today and reported by American Media Institute refers to a 32-page Urdu document obtained from a Pakistani citizen with connections inside the Pakistani Taliban.

"The document warns that 'preparations' for an attack in India are underway and predicts that an attack will provoke an apocalyptic confrontation with America," the report said.

"Even if the US tries to attack with all its allies, which undoubtedly it will, the ummah (Muslims) will be united, resulting in the final battle," it added.

Bruce Riedel, a retired CIA official and now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, said striking in India would magnify the ISIS' stature and threaten the stability of the region.

"Attacking in India is the Holy Grail of South Asian jihadists," he was quoted as saying.

The undated document is titled 'A Brief History of the Islamic State Caliphate, The Caliphate According to the Prophet.'

It seeks to unite dozens of factions of the Pakistani and



National League for Democracy chairperson Aung San Suu Kyi (C) submits her application at the Yangon southern district court yesterday to contest as a candidate in the coming 2015 general election. Myanmar's ruling party Wednesday admitted it was facing big losses in a general election likely to be swept by Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition.

PHOTO: AFP

US dentist regrets killing Cecil the lion

AFP, Chicago

An American dentist expressed regret for killing a much-loved Zimbabwean lion called Cecil, explaining Tuesday that he was relying on his guides "to ensure a legal hunt." Walter Palmer has come under fierce criticism after he was named as the hunter who killed Cecil, amid allegations that it took the lion 40 hours to die.

Cecil, a popular attraction among many international visitors to the Hwange National Park, was reportedly lured outside the park's boundaries by bait and initially shot with a bow and arrow. But the arrow is said to only have wounded him and a conservation charity said it was 40 hours before Palmer and his guide tracked Cecil down and shot him dead with a gun.

Within hours of the news breaking, Palmer's social media feeds were flooded with blistering attacks -- and threats. By late afternoon there were more than 1,800 messages about his practice on review site Yelp and a petition demanding justice for Cecil had garnered nearly 57,000 signatures.

"I had no idea that the lion I took was a known, local favorite, was collared and part of a study until the end of the hunt," Palmer said in a statement.

Palmer pleaded guilty in 2008 to federal charges related to the poaching of a black bear in Wisconsin, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.



Turkey launches heaviest raids yet on PKK

REUTERS, Istanbul

Turkish jets launched their heaviest assault on Kurdish militants in northern Iraq overnight since air strikes began last week, hours after President Tayyip Erdogan said a peace process had become impossible.

The strikes hit Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) targets including shelters, depots and caves in six areas, a statement from PM office said. A senior official told Reuters it was the biggest assault since the campaign started.

Iraq condemned the air strikes as a "dangerous escalation and an assault on Iraqi sovereignty", saying it was committed to ensuring militant attacks on Turkey were not carried out from within its territory.

Countries dissolve borders to fight Boko Haram terror

BBC ONLINE

Multinational troops fighting Boko Haram in West Africa will be able to pursue the militants across borders, Nigeria's presidential spokesman says.

Garba Shehu told the BBC this was there was now trust between those contributing troops since the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in May.

He was speaking ahead of the Nigerian leader's visit to Cameroon.

A boosted force with 8,700 troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria is to become fully operational next month.

Relations between Nigeria and Cameroon have been fraught for years because of territorial disputes, in particular over the Bakassi peninsula. The oil-rich region was eventually awarded to Cameroon by an international court.

BBC Nigeria analyst Naziru Mikailu says Buhari is trying to smooth over these diplomatic tensions as he meets President Paul Biya as both nations now face a new enemy threatening their territorial integrity.

On Tuesday, Cameroon announced it would deploy an extra 2,000 troops along its northern border with Nigeria to fight Boko Haram. It follows an upsurge in suicide attacks in northern Cameroon blamed on the Nigerian militants.

With the help of troops from Chad and Niger, earlier this year the Nigerian army managed to retake most of the areas taken over by the militants in north-eastern Nigeria.

Although the militants have lost their strongholds, they are still active and there has been an upsurge in suicide attacks since Buhari took office.

President Buhari has made the multinational force central to his government's strategy in tackling the insurgency.

The force of soldiers, police and civilian personnel will be based in Chad's capital, N'Djamena, which has also been affected by the violence.

"All the countries agreed this operation will not recognise international boundaries - wherever terrorists are they will be chased to these locations and they will be fought until they are finished," Shehu said.



Australia to impose cat curfew

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Australian cat owners could have to keep their pets indoors permanently under a '24-hour cat curfew' proposed by the government. The proposal has been made by Australia's first 'threatened species commissioner', Gregory Andrews, in a bid to protect native animals facing extinction due to cat attacks, according to the The Sydney Morning Herald. The country is currently facing a cat crisis as it struggles to cope with huge numbers of the animals. According to one estimate, the approximately 20 million cats in Australia kill around 75 million native animals a day. Australia is thought to have one of the worst extinction records in the world, losing about 29 native mammal species since the European arrival. It now lists some 1,800 species as under threat.