

NEWS IN brief

Turkey hits 64 PKK targets in Iraq AFP, Ankara

Turkish warplanes struck 64 Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) targets in overnight raids on northern Iraq, dropping 80 bombs, the Turkish media reported yesterday. At least 60 PKK militants were killed in the strikes, carried out by 21 Turkish F-16 and F-4 warplanes, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported, quoting security sources.

Maduro foe gets long jail term AFP, Caracas

Activists planned new protests in Venezuela yesterday after jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez was sentenced to nearly 14 years in prison for inciting violence during deadly anti-government protests in 2014. Lopez will serve his time at the Ramo Verde military prison, where he has been held since February 2014.

Syriza regains Greek poll lead AFP, Athens

Greece's radical-left Syriza party has established a narrow lead over conservative rivals New Democracy nine days from a snap election, according to a poll published yesterday. The poll data showed Syriza, led by charismatic Alexis Tsipras, who quit as prime minister last month, moved five percentage points clear of nearest rival with 28.5 percent of voter intentions.

US ambassador attacker gets jail in S Korea AFP, Seoul

The South Korean man behind a shocking knife attack that left the US ambassador in Seoul needing 80 stitches to a deep gash on his face, was convicted of attempted murder yesterday and jailed for 12 years. Prosecutors had sought a 15-year sentence for Kim Ki-Jong, 56, who lunged at Mark Lippert with a paring knife during a breakfast function in Seoul last March.

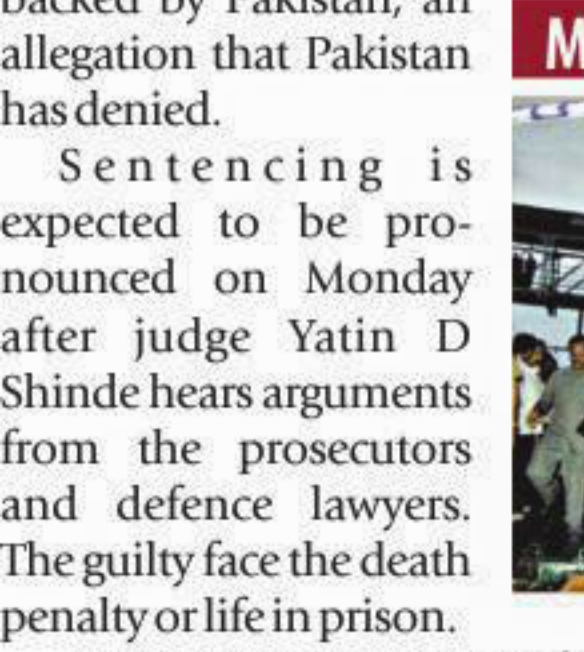


Netaji files to be made public THE HINDU ONLINE

Files pertaining to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in India state government's custody, will be put in the public domain, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced in Kolkata yesterday. The Chief Minister said that these files would now be readied and kept in the Police Archives for all to see. Banerjee said that it was up to the media to unravel the truth.

Indian court convicts 12

A court in India's western Mumbai city yesterday found 12 men guilty for their roles in the 2006 bombings of commuter trains. The 12 men were accused of waging war against the nation, conspiracy and murder. One man was acquitted. The serial bombings on 11 July 2006 killed 189 people and injured more than 800. The attack was blamed on Islamic militants backed by Pakistan, an allegation that Pakistan has denied.



Sentencing is expected to be pronounced on Monday after judge Yatin D Shinde hears arguments from the prosecutors and defence lawyers. The guilty face the death penalty or life in prison. "Justice has been done for the people of Mumbai. I will ask for the strictest punishment when I argue for their sentences," public prosecutor Raja Thakre told reporters. During the attack, seven blasts ripped through trains in the evening rush hour. The bombs were packed into seven pressure cookers and put in bags. The co-



Catalan pro-independence supporters take part in a demonstration called "Via Lliure a la Republica Catalana" (Way of Freedom for the Republic of Catalonia) in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday. More than a million Catalans thronged the streets of Barcelona yesterday demanding independence, local police said, ahead of regional polls billed as an indirect vote on breaking away from Spain.

Iran deal survives US Congress test

Obama hails vote as 'victory for diplomacy' AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama's Democrats have staved off a united Republican effort to sink the Iran nuclear deal, handing him a welcome foreign policy victory.

As expected, US senators fell two votes shy of the 60 needed Thursday to advance a resolution disapproving of the international accord, meaning the legislation aimed at sabotaging the deal is essentially dead.

"The Senate has spoken with a clarion voice and declared that the historic agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon will stand," Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid said.

Obama hailed the vote as "a victory for diplomacy, for American national security, and for the safety and security of the world."

Four Democrats including Chuck Schumer, the party's likely Senate leader in 2017 once Reid retires, opposed the accord, joining all 54 Republicans. But the 58-42 vote in favor of disapproval was not enough to get over the 60-vote procedural hurdle.

The result effectively assures that the deal will go into force while sparing Obama the embarrassment of having to use his veto pen against a disapproval resolution.

But Republicans, who unanimously oppose the accord, vowed to keep fighting, with House Speaker John Boehner insisting "this debate is far from over."



'ISIS' making, using chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq'

US official tells BBC; al-Qaeda leader slams Baghdadi's caliphate AGENCIES

There is a growing belief within the US government that the Islamic State militant group is making and using crude chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria, a US official has told the BBC.

The US has identified at least four occasions on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border where ISIS has used mustard agents, the official said.

"The US believes the group has a cell dedicated to building these weapons.

"They're using mustard," the individual said of ISIS. "We know they are."

The mustard agent was probably being used in powder form and packed into traditional explosives like mortar rounds, the official said.

When these weapons explode the mustard-laced dust blisters those who are exposed to it.

The official said the intelligence community believes the most plausible explanation is that they are manufacturing it.

"We assess that they have an active chemical weapons little research cell that they're working on to try and get better at it," the official said.

The official said knowledge to make the mustard agent is widely available, and it is not a complex

chemical to produce.

And on Thursday, Russia lifted its objections to a UN investigation into chemical attacks in Syria, clearing the way for the probe to begin, diplomats said.

The Russians also wants the investigators to weigh in on the use of chemical weapons in Iraq by Islamic State militants.

Meanwhile, just ahead of the fourteenth anniversary of al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the US, the leader of the terrorist group took aim in an angry speech at a mortal enemy -- but not American "crusaders" this time. Rather, the object of his tirade was the leader of ISIS in a declaration of war that will "irreconcilably" divide the two terror groups in a way the US may be able to exploit, experts say.

Ayman al-Zawahiri, who replaced Osama bin Laden as the head of al Qaeda four years ago, in a new audio message accused ISIS top leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of "sedition" and insisted the Iraqi terrorist recluse was not the leader of all Muslims and militant jihad as "caliph" of the Islamic State, as al-Baghdadi had claimed 14 months ago in a Mosul mosque.

ISIS, formerly the al Qaeda branch in Iraq, split from the larger group two years ago. In the tape, al-Zawahiri complained that Baghdadi had ignored Muslims suffering in Gaza and in Pakistan.

One step closer to statehood?

Palestinians to raise flag at UN AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas yesterday praised the countries which sided with "justice" by voting for the Palestinians to be allowed to raise their flag at United Nations headquarters.

The UN General Assembly, by a two-thirds vote, adopted a resolution on Thursday allowing the flags of Palestine and the Holy See -- both of which have non-member observer status -- to be hoisted alongside those of member states.

Abbas paid tribute to the countries which approved the resolution saying "they have placed themselves on the side of right and justice", the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

"The struggle will continue until the Palestinian flag flies over our eternal capital, occupied Jerusalem," said Abbas.

The flag is expected to be hoisted ahead of a September 30 visit by Abbas to address the UN General Assembly -- which upgraded the status of Palestinians to that of non-member observer in November 2012.

Thursday's resolution was adopted by 119 members while eight -- including Israel and the United States -- voted against and 49 abstained.

The Jewish state considers all of Jerusalem as its indivisible capital.

MIGRANT CRISIS

Saudi Arabia's aid to Germany: 200 mosques

Saudi Arabia has reportedly responded to the growing number of people fleeing the Middle East for western Europe -- by offering to build 200 mosques in Germany. According to the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, which quoted a report in the Lebanese newspaper Al Diyar, Saudi Arabia would build one mosque for every 100 refugees who entered Germany in extraordinary numbers last weekend. Syria's richer Gulf neighbours have been accused of not doing their fair share in the humanitarian crisis, with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the UAE also keeping their doors firmly shut to asylum-seekers.

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Camerawoman 'regrets' kicking refugees

A Hungarian camerawoman who caused global outrage after being caught on film tripping and kicking refugees as they fled police apologised yesterday and said that she has received death threats. "I panicked. I'm not a heartless, child-kicking racist camera-person," Petra Laszlo wrote in a letter to Hungarian newspaper Magyar Nemzet published on its website. "As I watch the footage now, it's like I'm not watching myself. I honestly regret what I have done and take responsibility for it." Laszlo was detained for questioning by police on Thursday and later released.



AFP, BUDAPEST

IOM: 432,761 migrants crossed sea this year

More than 430,000 migrants and refugees have reached Europe via the Mediterranean since the start of the year, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said yesterday, adding that nearly 2,750 had died attempting the trip. The IOM said it had recorded 432,761 arrivals in Europe since January 1, comprising 309,356 in Greece, 121,139 in Italy, 2,166 in Spain and 100 on the island of Malta. Half of all crossings so far this year have been made by people fleeing Syria's devastating civil war, which after four and a half years has claimed 240,000 lives.

AFP, GENEVA



A Syrian refugee kisses his daughter as he walks through a rainstorm towards Greece's border with Macedonia, near the Greek village of Idomeni, on Thursday. Most of the people flooding into Europe are refugees fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries who have a legal right to seek asylum, the United Nations said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Refugees were fed 'like animals in pen' in Hungary camp

AFP, Budapest

Disturbing footage yesterday emerged of the way migrants are being treated inside Hungary's main refugee camp on the border with Serbia, with images showing families fed "like animals in a pen".

The video, shot secretly by an Austrian volunteer who visited the flashpoint Roszke camp on Wednesday, shows some 150 people wildly scrambling for bags of sandwiches thrown at them by Hungarian police wearing helmets and hygiene masks in a fenced-in enclosure inside a big hall.

Women and children were caught in the chaotic scum as hungry people frantically tried to catch the bread flying through the air.

Many migrants too far back in the crowd climbed onto the fence, waving and shouting to get the officers' attention.

"It was like animals being fed in a pen, like Guantanamo in Europe," said Klaus Kufner, a volunteer who was with the woman who recorded the images, referring to the notorious prison camp where the US is accused of torturing inmates.

He told AFP he and Michaela Spritzendorfer -- who filmed the scenes --

had driven together to Roszke to bring food, clothes and medication to help the thousands of refugees pouring over the border.

"It was inhumane and it really speaks for these people that they didn't fight over the food despite being clearly very hungry," said Spritzendorfer, the wife of a Vienna councillor with Austria's Green Party.

The footage, which was uploaded on YouTube late on Thursday and widely shared on social media networks, had more than 20,000 views by yesterday morning.

The UN's refugee agency criticised the dire conditions at the Roszke camp earlier this week, with Hungary's headline stance against migrants also angering other EU countries.

Harsh laws which could see migrants jailed for crossing its borders are due to come into force on Tuesday.

Hungary's right-wing government in late August completed a razor-wire barrier along its 175-kilometre border with Serbia but it is not proving to be much of an obstacle for desperate people fleeing war in Syria and Iraq.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban has however ordered the building of an additional four-metre high fence that he wants completed by the end of October.

SINGAPORE POLLS

Ruling party wins majority

AFP, Singapore

Singapore's ruling People's Action Party (PAP) won a majority in snap parliamentary elections, official results showed early yesterday, with the party poised to form a new government and reverse setbacks suffered in 2011.

The PAP only needed 45 seats to hold on to power, and crossed that threshold in the early hours as official results were being announced district-by-district by the Elections Department.

The party, led by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, has been in power for 56 years, and held 80 of the 87 seats in the previous parliament.

An earlier official sampling of the votes cast showed the PAP was poised to win 83 of the 89 seats up for grabs in yesterday's vote.

There had been no doubt the PAP would win, but the victory margins it established



Lee Hsien Loong

in the early count showed a marked improvement over results in 2011, when its share of votes cast plunged to an all-time low of 60 percent.

The main opposition Workers' Party (WP) lost one of seven seats it held in the previous parliament.

Lee, who led a six-member PAP team to a landslide victory in the central district of Ang Mo Kio, thanked voters in his ward and across the country for the resounding mandate.

Lee, son of independence leader Lee Kuan Yew, had urged voters to look at the PAP's performance record against the opposition's demands for reform.

It was the first time all seats were being contested in Singapore history.

JAPAN FLOODS

3 killed; dozens still missing

AFP, Iosio City

Japanese authorities were yesterday grappling with the aftermath of massive flooding that killed at least three people, as thousands of rescuers frantically searched a shattered community for almost two dozen still missing.

The heaviest rain in decades pounded the country in the wake of Typhoon Etau, which smashed through Japan this week, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

Hundreds of thousands were ordered to leave their homes and at least 22 people were still unaccounted for yesterday evening in disaster-struck Josio city. Hundreds of people are believed to still be trapped in buildings, while more than 600 had been rescued in Ibaraki prefecture, where Josio is located, by yesterday evening.