

NEWS IN brief

14 Boko Haram men killed in Chad attacks

AFP, N'djamena
The Chadian government said yesterday that soldiers repelled two attacks by Boko Haram on army posts around Lake Chad, leaving 14 militants dead. "Two members of Boko Haram were neutralised and a third blew himself up, wounding 11 civilians" during an attempted suicide attack on the Bougouma army post, the government said in a statement, referring to the Nigerian jihadist group.

Britain to unveil new online spying laws

AFP, London
Britain's government gave the first details yesterday of contested plans to update Internet spying laws to keep pace with the digital age. The proposed law comes as intelligence agencies and police grapple with monitoring terrorist activity online amid a debate sparked by Edward Snowden over government access to personal data online.

One dead, one hurt in US univ shooting

AFP, Washington
One person was killed and another was wounded in a shooting early yesterday at a university in the US state of North Carolina, and the suspected gunman was still at large, officials said. The Winston-Salem State University said in a Facebook post that the incident was reported overnight at about 1:20 am local time.

Delhi starts 'pollution toll' for trucks

AFP, New Delhi
Delhi yesterday introduced a toll for all trucks and commercial vehicles in an attempt to improve air quality in the world's most polluted capital ahead of Diwali celebrations. Trucks are banned from entering the Indian capital during the day, but every night after 8pm more than 50,000 pour in, according to the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment.

Bomb kills at least three on Pakistan train

AFP, Quetta
At least three people were killed and 12 wounded when a passenger train hit a bomb planted on a railway track in southwest Pakistan yesterday, officials said. The bomb exploded when the train reached Mastung, a district in Pakistan's insurgency-hit southwestern Baluchistan province.



People lay toys and flowers for victims of a Russian airliner which crashed in Egypt, outside Pulkovo airport in St Petersburg, Russia yesterday. International investigators began probing why the airliner carrying 224 people crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing everyone on board.

Shabab attack kills 12 in Somalia hotel

Lawmaker, ex-military commander among the dead

AFP, Mogadishu
At least 12 people were killed in the Somali capital yesterday after Shebab gunmen used a vehicle packed with explosives to blast their way inside a hotel, police said.
The al-Qaeda linked Shebab claimed responsibility for the dawn attack at the Sahafi hotel, which is popular with members of parliament, government employees and businessmen. After the car bomb ripped a hole in the hotel's fortified walls, gunmen then stormed the building firing semi-automatic rifles, with the sounds of grenade blasts, witnesses said.
"This is the action of an increasingly desperate, internally-divided group of extremists," Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said in a statement, after security forces defeated the Shebab in intense gun battles.
"Our security forces have full control of the situation," he added.
Somalia's National and Intelligence Agency declared the attack over several hours after shooting began, although special forces appeared to be carrying out mopping up operations for some time afterwards.
The African Union mission in Somalia, AMISOM, a 22,000-strong force fighting the Shebab, said they fought alongside government troops and had secured the hotel.
"Attackers exploded a car bomb to gain entry before going inside... we have reports of 12 dead," policeman Abdulrahid Dahir said.
Among the dead are reported to be a Somali journalist, colleagues said, as well as a lawmaker and a former senior army commander.



UN envoy to Somalia, Nick Kay, condemned the "bloody attack" which he said underlined the need to help support Somalia's security forces in stopping such attacks.
Witnesses said they had seen several bodies of people killed in the initial blast, when a minibus packed with explosives was reportedly used to ram the gates of the hotel's fortified compound, which was followed by a second heavy explosion.
Shebab commandos then stormed inside, with witnesses reporting intense gunfire and several loud blasts.
"There was a huge explosion and people around the entrance were killed," said Mohamed Ismael, a witness, who was nearby when the attack began.
Shebab insurgents, who are fighting to overthrow the internationally backed government in Mogadishu, have carried out a string of attacks on hotels in the capital.
The Islamists have frequently used car bombs driven by suicide bombers to break into a complex or a building, with more attackers then following on foot.

IS overruns town in Syria

Kurdish forces prepare for battle to retake Iraq's Sinjar from jihadists

AGENCIES
Islamic State group jihadists seized a small town in Syria's central Homs province yesterday with help from local rebels and advanced on a majority Christian village, a monitoring group said.
"The Islamic State group easily took control of the village of Maheen, southeast of Homs, after two suicide attacks," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Maheen lies 70 kilometres southeast of the government-controlled provincial capital Homs city, and 35 kilometres east of the Syrian-Lebanese border.
For the past two years, a ceasefire between rebel factions in the town and regime troops at surrounding checkpoints had governed Maheen, reports AFP.
But yesterday, the rebel factions turned against the government fighters and joined ranks with IS jihadists, Abdel Rahman said.
IS launched its assault from the nearby Christian village of Al-Qaryatayn, which it seized in August, he added.
From Maheen, the jihadists pushed northeast toward the Christian-majority village of Sadad and the nearby highway running south from Homs to the Syrian capital.
Meanwhile, Kurdish forces are massing in northwest Iraq for an offensive to retake the town of Sinjar from Islamic State militants who overrun it more than a year ago, killing and enslaving thousands of its Yazidi residents and triggering US-led air strikes.
Sinjar is a symbolic and strategic prize sitting astride the main highway linking the cities of Mosul and Raqqa - Islamic State's bastions in Iraq and Syria.
Villagers along a main road to the mountain reported seeing dozens of military transport vehicles packed with Kurdish peshmerga fighters pass in recent days.
Preparations for the offensive have been complicated by rivalry between various Kurdish and Yazidi forces in Sinjar.
Also yesterday, at least 18 IS fighters were killed in the town of Harbil, north of Syria's second city Aleppo, in clashes with other rebel groups and air strikes by a US-led coalition, Abdel Rahman said.

EU MIGRANT CRISIS

Six more kids drown off Greek islands

AFP, Athens
At least 13 migrants, six of them children, drowned as two boats making the hazardous crossing from Turkey capsized in the Aegean Sea off Greece yesterday, the coastguard said.
The first tragedy occurred off the island of Samos when a boat overturned just 20 metres from shore.
Ten bodies -- including six children, four of them babies -- were found in the vessel's cabin while that of a year ago was washed up on the island, where dozens of refugees have perished trying to reach Europe in recent days.
Two others were still missing with coastguards saying 15 were plucked from the water. A boat from the European border agency Frontex also recovered two bodies near the island of Farmakonissi, near Samos, the coastguard said.
Frontex also rescued three others, who said their boat was carrying 15 people when it sank in Turkish waters.
Greek authorities and the Turkish coastguard "continue to search the zone to find the migrants who disappeared in the sinking, which probably took place off the Turkish coast," a representative of the Greek coastguard's press office told AFP.
The new sinkings add to a string of migrant boat tragedies since Monday off the Greek islands of Lesbos, Kalymnos and Rhodes in which more than 60 people have drowned, at least 28 of them children.
On Friday alone 22 people, including 17 children, lost their lives trying to cross to the eastern Aegean islands from Turkey, to which more than two million Syrian refugees have fled.

GROWING INTOLERANCE IN INDIA

Sahitya Akademi urged to reinvent itself

PTI, New Delhi
Indian writers including those who had returned their Sahitya Akademi awards yesterday wrote to the National Academy of Letters urging it to build on the resolution passed during its recent emergency meet and respond in a "strong, humane and robust" manner to situations.
"This is an urgent matter at this moment of spiralling hatred and intolerance," a group of 41 writers said a statement to the Akademi president, and also asked the literary body to "reinvent" itself.
The authors, who have written the letter include Nayantara Sahgal, Ashok Vajpeyi, Ganesh Devy, Githa Hariharan, Gurbachan Singh Bhullar, K Satchidanandan, Keki Daruwalla, Krishn Sobti, Kum Veerabhadrapa, Sara Joseph, Shashi Deshpande and Waryam Sandhu, among others.
At least 36 writers including Nayantara Sahgal, Ashok Vajpeyi, had one after another returned their state awards in protest against the Akademi's "muted response" to killings of writers and rationalists, besides on incidents such as the Dadri lynching and blackening of Sudheendra Kulkarni's face in Mumbai.
Five writers had also stepped down from the literary body's official positions.



A Palestinian protester burns a poster of Israeli leaders during an anti Israel protest in Khan Younis in the southern of Gaza Strip yesterday. In the latest incident of violence, a Palestinian who tried to stab an Israeli soldier was shot dead north of Hebron in the occupied West Bank, the Israeli army said.

Stay alert to election fraud

Myanmar's Suu Kyi tells huge rally

AFP, Yangon
Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi told tens of thousands of supporters yesterday to be vigilant against election fraud during a huge show of strength a week before landmark elections.
The country heads to the polls next Sunday in what observers are hoping will be the fairest election for decades as the nation slowly shakes off almost a half-century of brutal military rule.
"The people's strength is our strength as well," Suu Kyi, 70, told a sea of supporters in eastern Yangon, her first major rally in the commercial hub and by far the largest gathering yet of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party.



"We do not need to work with dirty ways," she added, to loud cheers and laughter.
"We will act until we win the correct way... We all need to be fully vigilant," she added.
It will be the first nationwide election for 25 years to be contested by Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party, potentially tipping the balance of power away from the military and its ruling party allies for the first time in generations if the vote is free.
Myanmar was run for decades by a brutal junta which jailed, killed and exiled dissidents while fixing elections or simply ignoring their results.

Mozart's sister was as talented as Amadeus

MAIL ONLINE

Mozart's sister was just as talented as the great composer - but had to stop playing so she could learn to sew and find a husband, experts say.
Maria Anna Mozart, nicknamed 'Nannerl', was seen as being just as skilled as her brother Wolfgang Amadeus and received rave reviews across Europe for her musical ability.
But despite often being billed first in shows the siblings played together, 'Nannerl' was 'not given the opportunity' to make money from her talent later in life and stayed at home because of the family's economic struggles, it has been reported.
The composer's father Leopold Mozart, a court musician, started to teach Maria Anna to play harpsichord when she was just eight-years-old - with her three-year-old brother by her side.
By the 1760s she was touring Europe as a pianist, performing in Germany, Austria, London and Paris.
According to the Smithsonian, Leopold wrote in a letter in 1764: "My little girl plays the most difficult works which we have... with incredible precision and so excellently."
"What it all amounts to is this, that my little girl, although she is only 12 years old, is one of the most skilful players in Europe."
Six years later, Wolfgang wrote to his sister saying that he was 'in awe that you can compose so well, in a word, the song you wrote is beautiful.'
Leopold ended her touring when Maria Anna was eligible to marry at the age of 18 - though she carried on composing at home in Salzburg while her father and brother were travelling through Italy.
Her experiences have been brought to life in the play 'The Other Mozart', written by Sylvia Milo.
She told the Huffington Post that the Mozart family 'risked everything' trying to promote Wolfgang 'so they could be lifted up by him.'



Libya court adjourns trial of Gaddafi son

AFP, Tripoli

Saadi Gaddafi, a son of Libya's slain dictator Moamer Gaddafi, appeared in court yesterday to face trial on charges of murder and repression during the 2011 revolution.
Dressed in prison-issued blue uniform, Saadi, 42, sat in the dock as the presiding judge consulted with a defence lawyer. Minutes later the judge announced that he was adjourning the trial to December 6. He gave no reason for the delay.
Gaddafi's third oldest son had sought refuge in Niger after the 2011 armed uprising that toppled his father. He is charged with the first-degree murder in 2005 of a former trainer at Tripoli's Al-Ittihad football club and his trial opened in May.

Probe into Russia plane crash begins

Rescuers recover 163 bodies so far as search widens for debris; Moscow mourns victims of Sinai tragedy

AFP, Wadi Al-zolamat
International investigators yesterday began probing why a Russian airliner carrying 224 people crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing everyone on board, as rescue workers widened their search for missing victims.
President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi urged people to await the outcome of the investigation to determine the cause of the crash, after the Islamic State jihadist group claimed it brought down the A-321.
"In such cases, leave it to specialists to determine the cause of the plane crash because it is a subject of an extensive and complicated technical study," state news agency MENA quoted Sisi as telling a gathering of army officers.
At the crash scene in the centre of North Sinai, in the Wadi Al-Zolamat area, numerous blackened parts of the plane were scattered, with the smell of burnt metal lingering in the air, an AFP correspondent reported.
There were no bodies visible, but soldiers guarded a dozen black, red and orange bags, apparently suitcases of passengers from flight KGL9268.
A few metres (yards) further lay a tiny red jacket, probably of a child, underlining the horror of Saturday's tragedy that killed 17 children including a 10-month-old girl.
An army officer involved in search efforts said rescue crews had recovered 163 bodies so far, including that of a girl found eight kilometres from the main wreckage.
Flags were flying at half mast in Russia yesterday and entertainment television programmes were cancelled as part of a national day of mourning for the victims, most of them Russians, aged from 10 months to 77 years.
The Egyptian government said there were 214 Russian and three Ukrainian passengers on board, and seven crew members.
Cairo and Moscow have both downplayed the claim from the Islamic State's (IS) branch in Egypt that it brought down the aircraft flown by Kogalymavia airline, operating under the name Metrojet, en route from Sharm el-Sheikh to Saint Petersburg.