

NEWSIN brief

Israeli spy released after 30 yrs in US jail

AFP, Butner

Jewish American spy Jonathan Pollard was released from a US prison yesterday after serving nearly 30 years for passing American secrets to Israel. A US court jailed Pollard, a Stanford University graduate and former US Navy intelligence analyst, for life in 1987 after he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to deliver national defense information to a foreign government.

Ebola-free Liberia sees new case: WHO

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday confirmed that a new case of the deadly Ebola virus has surfaced in Liberia, which was declared Ebola-free in September. Since the beginning of the outbreak, Liberia has registered more than 10,600 cases and 4,808 deaths, according to the latest situation report from the UN health agency published earlier this week.

Nitish Kumar sworn in as Bihar CM

TNN, Patna

Janata Dal-United's Nitish Kumar, whose Grand Alliance with former rival Lalu Prasad saw them storming to power in Bihar, was sworn in as chief minister for a record fifth time in a mega ceremony at Patna's sprawling Gandhi Maidan on Friday. In a major show of strength by anti-BJP parties, the event was attended by a galaxy of opposition leaders from across the country, including Arvind Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee, Tarun Gogoi, Virbhadra Singh, as well as several party chiefs and senior leaders.

PARIS CARNAGE She 'did not blow herself up'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Hasna Ait Boulahcen, the woman labelled 'Europe's first woman suicide bomber' did not blow herself up during a police raid on an apartment building in Saint-Denis, new reports have claimed.

Despite French prosecutors initially saying she had detonated an explosives vest and died during the assault on Wednesday, a police source reportedly told Agence France-Presse news agency the suicide bomber who blew herself up was a man, not a woman.

Boulahcen is reported to have shouted: "Help me, help me, I am on fire," prior to the explosion. Her body parts were later found strewn across the road.

It was through intercepting Aitboulahcen's phone calls that security agencies



Hasna Ait Boulahcen

were able to track her cousin Abdelhamid Abaaoud and six other terror suspects to their hiding place.

After the explosion of the suicide bomb, sporadic gunfire could be heard from within the flat.

Jean-Michel Fauvergue, the head of the elite Raid unit that led the operation, described his officers "saturating the place with grenades" when firing continued after Aitboulahcen had blown herself up and a sniper had hit another man.

Officers eventually arrested three men from inside the building and another man and woman found outside.

REFUGEE CRISIS



A man kisses his wife as she holds their children just after their arrival on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

US, Balkans tighten screw

Congress votes to ban migrants from Iraq, Syria, Balkans reject all except war migrants

AFP, Washington

The House of Representatives voted Thursday to ban Syrian and Iraqi refugees from entering the United States until tougher screening measures are in place, a move some slammed as giving in to xenophobia after the Paris attacks.

Meanwhile, Countries along the migrant route through the Balkans have begun tightening restrictions by accepting only those fleeing war, causing a backlog of hundreds of people Thursday on the Greek-Macedonian border.

Hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing conflict and poverty across the Mediterranean have travelled up from Greece through the Balkans this year, aiming to start new lives in more prosperous northern European countries.

But officials in Balkan countries at the heart of the migrant route said Thursday they were restricting the crossings of economic migrants and allowing in only those fleeing conflict. Similar statements were made by Serbia and Macedonia.

The Republican legislation, the first congressional response to last week's mur-

'SYRIAN REFUGEES ARE RABID DOGS'

US Republican presidential hopeful Ben Carson on Thursday compared refugees fleeing Syria's civil war and Islamic State extremists to rabid dogs. Carson, a top contender in his party's 2016 race for the White House, made the remarks at a campaign stop in the southern US state of Alabama. "We must balance safety against being a humanitarian," Carson said as he talked about admitting Syrian refugees into the United States. "If there's a rabid dog running around your neighborhood, you're probably not going to assume something good about

derous assaults, passed overwhelmingly, 289 to 137. Nearly four dozen Democrats went against their president to support the measure.

The bill now heads to the Senate, where its fate is uncertain, but it sets up a clash with President Barack Obama, who has threatened to veto the bill and has criticized Republicans for "hysteria" and falling short of their human-

itarian duty to take in the oppressed. The bill follows the attacks in Paris that left 129 people dead, claiming to be the work of Islamic State. Seven of the perpetrators died in the attacks, and one of them is thought to have been a Syrian who entered Europe via Greece with migrants. It still needs to pass the Senate before

hitting Obama's desk. The bill would require the head of the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence to sign off on each refugee as being "not a threat to the security of the United States," following an FBI background check.

Calling the Paris attacks "a game changer", Rep Brad Ashford, a Democrat from Nebraska, said: "I cannot sit back and ignore the concerns of my constituents and the American public."

House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said he supported the bill because "it is against the values of our nation and the values of a free society to give terrorists the opening they are looking for".

Others urged compassion for those fleeing the war-torn regions.

"Defeating terrorism should not mean slamming the door in the faces of those fleeing the terrorists," said Rep Jerrold Nadler, a Democrat from New York. "We might as well take down the Statue of Liberty".

Republicans do not have the votes to override Obama's veto, but say that their affirmative vote is symbolic.

AFP, WASHINGTON



Malian troops take position outside the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, yesterday. Inset, still image from video shows a hostage rushed out of the hotel. Gunmen shouting Islamic slogans attacked the hotel full of foreigners in Mali's capital Bamako early yesterday morning, taking 170 people hostage, a senior security source and the hotel's operator said. PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian poet gets death in Saudi for apostasy: HRW

REUTERS, Riyadh

A Saudi Arabian court has sentenced a Palestinian poet to death for apostasy, abandoning his Muslim faith, according to trial documents seen by Human Rights Watch, its Middle East researcher Adam Google said yesterday.

Ashraf Fayadh was detained by the country's religious police in 2013 in Abha, in southwest Saudi Arabia, and then rearrested and tried in early 2014.

The verdict of that court sentenced him to four years in prison and 800 lashes but after appeal another judge passed a death sentence on Fayadh three days ago, said Google.

"I have read the trial documents from the lower court verdict in 2014 and another one from 17 November. It is very clear he has been sentenced to death for apostasy," Google said.

Saudi Arabia's justice system is based on Sharia Islamic law and its judges are clerics from the kingdom's ultra conservative

Wahhabi school of Sunni Islam. In the Wahhabi interpretation of Sharia, religious crimes including blasphemy and apostasy incur the death penalty.

In January liberal writer Raif Badawi was flogged 50 times after his sentencing to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for blasphemy last year, prompting an international outcry. Badawi remains in prison, but diplomats say he is unlikely to be flogged again.

Saudi judges have extensive scope to impose sentences according to their own interpretation of Sharia law without reference to any previous cases. After a case has been heard by lower courts, appeals courts and the supreme court, a convicted defendant can be pardoned by King Salman.

Fayadh's conviction was based on evidence from a prosecution witness who claimed to have heard him cursing God, Islam's Prophet Mohammad and Saudi Arabia, and the contents of a poetry book he had written years earlier.



Suu Kyi rebukes MPs over poll expenses

REUTERS, Naypyitaw

Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi has rebuked some politicians from her victorious National League for Democracy (NLD) for exceeding an internal election spending limit amid worries the beaten ruling party may seek to challenge poll results, an NLD source said.

In private meetings with her advisers and lawmakers, the pro-democracy champion also warned party auditors to carefully scrutinise its campaign reports before they were submitted to the election commission.

The tension in the winning camp followed local media reports saying the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which was crushed at the polls, may apply for dozens of NLD candidates to be disqualified for spending too much on their campaigns.

Though it appears that Suu Kyi's candidates at worst transgressed an internal party limit set at 5 million kyat (\$3,885) - half of the official ceiling - the issue could enable the USDP to pick off some of her talent before the official results are declared.

Suu Kyi's sensitivity over the issue highlights a deep-seated lack of trust between her people and the establishment, even after President Thein Sein and the powerful army chief Min Aung Hlaing both said they would respect the result of the election.

The former democratic activists and political prisoners in her party are still traumatised by the memories of the 1990 election, when several NLD candidates were disqualified for overspending. The NLD won that election by a landslide, but the junta ignored the results and kept Suu Kyi confined under house arrest.

'That's for Paris' killings

Russia's message to IS as cruise missiles batter militants in Syria

AGENCIES

Russian airmen have inscribed 'That's for Paris' on the side of one of the bombs they plan to use against IS in Syria.

A picture of the bomb was shared from the official Twitter account of the Russian Embassy in the UK.

The report came as Russia yesterday unleashed cruise missiles from warships in the Caspian Sea at targets across Syria, the defence minister said, as Moscow kept up its intensifying bombardments in the war-torn country.

Moscow fired 18 missiles from ships in its Caspian Sea fleet at seven targets in the Raqa, Idlib and Aleppo provinces, defence minister Sergei Shoigu was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

It was the second time that warships have been used since the start of the bombing campaign on September 30.

Shoigu told President Vladimir Putin in a briefing that cruise missile strikes against one target near the Islamic State-controlled city of Deir Ezzor had killed "more than 600 fight-



An image taken yesterday from a footage made available on the Russian Defence Ministry's official website purporting to show a Russian warship launching cruise missiles in the Caspian Sea during a strike against Islamic State (IS) group's positions in Syria. Inset, a ground crew member writing words "For Paris" on a bomb on a Russian military jet at Hmeimim air base in Syria. PHOTO: AFP

ers", but did not specify when the strike had taken place.

At least eight people were killed in at least 50 air strikes in the eastern Deir Ezzor province yesterday, during which dozens of oil tankers were

destroyed, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Russia has also doubled the number of jets it has based in government-held territory in Syria to 69 over the past few days, Shoigu said.

Asean summit to focus on

IS militancy

Says Obama in Malaysia
AFP, Kuala Lumpur

US President Barack Obama said summit meetings among world leaders this weekend in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur will focus on the global fight against Islamic State militancy and on the disputed South China Sea.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, Obama said "Malaysia is part of the coalition to fight (Islamic State) and can be extraordinarily helpful on issues like countering the destructive and perverse narrative that's developed."

Malaysia deployed extraordinary security measures around Kuala Lumpur on Friday as leaders from 18 countries arrived for a pair of weekend summits amid fresh attacks by Islamist militants.

Malaysia's police chief cited unconfirmed reports of an "imminent terrorist threat" in the country, following last week's attacks in Paris and the downing of a Russian airliner over Egypt by Islamic State militants.

Some 4,500 soldiers were deployed or on standby to secure the summit, in addition to thousands of police who have fanned out around the Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

In addition to Obama, leaders from China, Japan, Russia, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand are attending the East Asia Summit following the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meeting.

Obama promised students at a town hall meeting at a Kuala Lumpur University that he would raise concerns about corruption and Malaysia's crackdown on dissent in his meeting with Najib. Critics have accused Najib of escalating a crackdown on dissent and free expression after losing the popular vote in the 2013 general election.

138 leaders to attend Paris climate summit

AFP, Paris

A total of 138 heads of state and government so far will attend a climate summit due to kick off in terror-hit Paris on November 30, the French government said yesterday.

Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela was the latest to confirm his attendance at the opening by world leaders including US President Barack Obama, China's Xi Jinping, Narendra Modi of India and Russia's Vladimir Putin, a French presidency official said.

The Paris Conference of Parties (COP21) is tasked with producing the first-ever deal committing all the world's nations to climate action starting in 2020.

About 160 countries have already filed voluntary carbon-cutting pledges to underpin the future pact, but scientists say the aggregate effect falls far short, and Earth is on course for warming of about 3 C, or more.