

NEWSINbrief

Israel 'to open UAE diplomatic mission'

BBC ONLINE

Israel is to open its first diplomatic mission in the UAE, Israel says, despite the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Israel has opened trade and other offices in some Gulf states before, but there are no official ties. The UAE, like most other Arab states, has not recognised Israel since the Arab-Israeli conflict began in 1948.

Another sickening gang-rape in India

BBC ONLINE

Four schoolboys in the western Indian city of Mumbai have been arrested for allegedly gang-raping their classmate. Police said the boys, reported to be between 15-16 years old, also recorded a video and circulated it on WhatsApp. The boys were produced in court after which they were sent to a juvenile reform home, police said, adding that they were investigating further.



Miss World Canada gets China snub

BBC ONLINE

Canada's Miss World contender has said she was barred from boarding a plane from Hong Kong to the Chinese city hosting this year's pageant. Chinese-born Anastasia Lin, 25, says she did not receive an invitation to attend the event, which meant she could not apply for a visa. But she attempted to travel to Sanya, via Hong Kong, as Canadian tourists are eligible for visas on arrival. Lin has previously criticised the "repressions and censorship" in China.

'ISI planning major strikes in India'

TNN, New Delhi

Coinciding with the 7th anniversary of 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the central intelligence agencies have received specific inputs that Pakistan's ISI recently held a meeting with chief commanders of top terrorist outfits - Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM) - asking them to carry out terror strikes in India. Sources said ISI is providing logistical help to the three outfits. The terrorists are said to be highly trained and have been asked to cross over to India before the routes in the upper reaches are blocked by snow. Following the inputs, the Indian agencies fear a major attack in the next one month.

Sonia meets Modi for tea

Rahul, not invited, says PM called meeting 'under pressure'

NDTV ONLINE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited his predecessor Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi to his home for discussions over tea yesterday evening, in what was seen as an attempt to unlock the Goods and Services Tax or GST, the government's most ambitious tax reform.

This was the first face-to-face meeting between the prime minister and Sonia Gandhi since his BJP won a landslide victory in the national election last year, ending the Congress-led UPA's 10-year-rule.

Sources said the meeting was a "preliminary ice-breaker"; that this was more of a gesture by the PM to reach out to the opposition.

Speaking in Parliament just before the tea meeting, PM Modi had struck a conciliatory note and said: "Consensus is more

important than majority rule."

Rahul Gandhi, the Congress party's number two leader, was not invited to the meeting that was immediately dubbed "chai pe charcha" by many.

"This meeting is happening after public pressure," Rahul said. Union ministers Arun Jaitley and Venkaiah Naidu also attended the meet. The Congress has repeatedly accused the government of failing to bring the opposition on board on GST, billed as the biggest tax reform since independence.

The government wants to implement GST by April 2016, but the deadline may be missed if parliament does not pass the bill in the winter session.

The GST will create a single market in India after doing away with state levies and is expected to boost the economy.



HOMAGE TO PARIS VICTIMS



People wounded in the Paris attacks and family members attend a ceremony to pay a national homage to the victims of terrorism at Les Invalides monument in Paris; a combination of pictures shows French flags seen on windows and facades of buildings in Paris; and a woman installs blue, white and red candles, the colours of the French flag, during a tribute to the victims, at the Place de la Republique in Paris, France, yesterday.



PHOTO: REUTERS

'We won't give in to fear or hate'

In response to 'army of fanatics', Hollande vows 'more songs'

AFP, Paris

President Francois Hollande yesterday vowed that France would respond to the "army of fanatics" which carried out the Paris attacks with more songs, concerts and shows, as the nation paused to pay homage to the victims.

"We will not give in either to fear or to hate," said Hollande on a cold and misty day in the courtyard of the historic Invalides, the 17th-century complex housing Napoleon's tomb.

"To all of you, I solemnly promise that France will do everything to destroy the army of fanatics that committed these crimes," he said before a crowd of 2,600 dignitaries and some of those injured in the violence.

Some sat in wheelchairs, while firefighters and ambulance personnel in uniform stood silently in rows, two weeks to the day since gunmen opened fire on bars, restaurants and a concert hall and detonated suicide vests at the Stade de France national sta-

dium.

Pictures of the victims were displayed on a giant screen, the photographs striking for the fact that most were of people under 35.

The attacks -- claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group -- were the worst ever terror attack on French soil, leaving 130 dead and 350

WAR ON TERROR

Syria 'welcomes' France's statement on including regime in anti-IS fight

West 'not ready' to work with Russia: Kremlin

Paris weapons 'bought from German dealer'



injured.

Hollande said "130 destinies had been stolen, 130 laughs that will never be heard again," adding that they had come from more than 50 places in France and 17 countries.

The attackers acted "in the name of an insane cause and a betrayed God," said Hollande.

He said France would respond to the attacks defiantly, with more "songs, concerts and shows. We will continue to go to stadiums."

However, a handful of the victims' families boycotted the ceremony, saying the government failed to take sufficient measures to protect the nation in the wake

of the jihadist shootings at Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper and a Jewish supermarket in Paris in January.

Reflecting the solemnity of the ceremony, Liberation and Le Parisien newspapers listed all the victims on their front pages Friday in stark black and white print.

Having vowed to crush IS for

their role in the attacks, Hollande has spent the week in a whirlwind diplomatic bid to build a broad military coalition, although his efforts have met with limited success.

He said Thursday that he and President Vladimir Putin had agreed to coordinate air strikes against IS. The future role of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, however, remains a deeply divisive issue.

But the idea of a single anti-IS coalition involving Western powers and Russia did not get off the ground as US President Barack Obama is said to have given a cool response to Hollande's proposal.

The Kremlin yesterday said that Western powers were not ready to form a coalition with Russia to fight the jihadists in Syria.

"At the moment, unfortunately, our partners are not ready to work within the format of single coalition," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He added however that Russia remained open to cooperation

"in any format our partners would be ready for."

Yesterday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said he could envisage Syrian government troops taking part in the anti-IS fight, though he later clarified to AFP that this could only happen after a change of regime. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem welcomed the proposal.

As France mourns its dead, an international manhunt is still on for two key suspects in the attacks -- Salah Abdeslam, who played a key logistical role in the wave of terror, and Mohamed Abrini, seen with Abdeslam two days before the November 13 atrocities.

Meanwhile, newspaper Bild yesterday reported that Four assault rifles used in the deadly Paris attacks were allegedly purchased from a trafficker in Germany. Quoting documents from the Stuttgart prosecutor's office, the newspaper said two AK47s and two Zastava M70s were sold on November 7 by the arms dealer to a customer in Paris.

Blast at Shia rally kills 21 in Nigeria

AFP, Dakasoye

At least 21 people were killed yesterday when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the crowds at a Shia Muslim procession near the north Nigerian city of Kano, in the latest violence to hit the troubled region.

The attack happened in the village of Dakasoye, some 20 kilometres south of the city, during a march by followers of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria.

"Our procession came under a suicide attack," Muhammad Turi, who was leading thousands of people from Kano to Zaria, in the neighbouring state of Kaduna, told reporters at the scene.

An AFP reporter in Dakasoye said the road was splattered with bloodstains but the followers had continued their march.

Most were wearing black and carrying flags or portraits of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Hussein, and were flanked by security guards.

Boko Haram, the radical Sunni jihadists who want to create a hardline Islamic state in northeast Nigeria, has previously been blamed for attacks on Shia Muslims in the region.

Last November at least 15 people were killed and some 50 others injured in a suicide bombing targeting the Shia Muslim festival of Ashura in the city of Potiskum, in Yobe state.

Ashura marks the death of Hussein.



Delegates pose for a family photo at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Valletta, Malta November 27, 2015. Queen Elizabeth II opened the summit. Commonwealth leaders yesterday unveiled a new \$1 billion Green Finance Facility to support environmental projects within the 53-nation bloc as the race against climate change intensifies.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Climate disasters may double without emissions cut: ADB

Paris pledges can avert extreme warming: study

AFP, Manila

Climate disasters may double in the next two decades unless the world cuts its carbon dioxide emissions, the Asian Development Bank said yesterday, with "high risk" nations in Asia set to be hard hit.

Two days before a world climate summit opens in Paris, the Manila-based lender said deadlier storms, floods and heat waves were linked to rising global temperatures, adding to a growing chorus on the catastrophic effects of climate change.

The report, which looked at disasters from 1970 to 2013, said if carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere continued to rise at an annual rate of two parts per million, the frequency of climate disasters could double in 17 years.

This meant the average country could experience 1.55 climate disasters per year, compared to the current average of 0.775, the study added.

Meanwhile, a study said Thursday that pledges made in the lead-up to next week's major Paris climate change conference

could limit severe warming, but only if countries turn their words into long-term action.

"If countries implement their INDCs through 2030 and ramp up efforts beyond 2030, we'll have a much better chance of avoiding extreme warming and keeping temperature change below two-degrees Celsius," said Gokul Iyer.

Iyer was the lead scientist of the study, which was published in the journal Science.

"It's important to know that the INDCs are a stepping stone to what we can do in the future," added Iyer, of the Joint Global Change Research Institute, a collaboration between the US Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the University of Maryland.

Ken Kimmell, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, a non-profit group, said the Paris meeting was a mixed bag.

"This is the first time since climate negotiations started two decades ago that virtually all the world's nations have committed to being part of the solution," he said.

2 Palestinians shot dead in West Bank

AP, Jerusalem

Israeli troops shot and killed two Palestinians after they rammed their cars into soldiers in separate attacks in the West Bank yesterday as the country's defense minister urged Israelis to brace themselves for more violence, saying he cannot see an end to the near-daily Palestinian attacks.

In the first attack early yesterday morning, police said a Palestinian intentionally drove his car into a group of Israeli soldiers at a bus stop in the West Bank, injuring two before he was shot and killed by soldiers.

Later, the military said a Palestinian rammed his car into Israeli soldiers near Hebron, injuring six before he was shot dead at the scene.

Since mid-September, 19 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks. At least 96 Palestinians have also died.