

Sushma Swaraj may visit Pakistan: report NDTV ONLINE

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj may visit Pakistan next week, top government sources told NDTV. She is likely to attend a 27-nation meeting on Afghanistan, which will be held in Islamabad, days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif shook hands in Paris. India had been invited for the conference, which will be held on December 7 and 8.

Pak brother kills sister for voting AFP, Islamabad

An angry brother shot his elder sister dead because she voted in Pakistani local elections after he had forbidden her to do so, police said yesterday. Danish Ali, 20, killed his sister Asif Noreen, a 32-year old schoolteacher, in the town of Taxila 25 kilometres west of Islamabad on Tuesday, police told AFP.

Court annuls Catalan independence bid AFP, Madrid

Spain's Constitutional Court yesterday revoked a resolution by Catalonia's parliament that declared the start of a secession process in the wealthy northeastern region. In a ruling, the court ruled the motion "violates constitutional norms" which "affirm the unity of the Spanish nation. But Catalonia's regional government quickly rose up in defiance: "The content of this declaration, approved by an absolute majority, is to remain unchanged no matter how many sentences the Spanish Constitutional Court issues".

Do yoga and cut prison time! AFP, Mumbai

Prison officers in western India have come up with a novel way for convicts to secure early release -- master some yoga poses and pass an exam, an official said yesterday. Inmates at Yerwada Central Jail in Maharashtra state can cut their sentences by up to three months if they impress wardens in the ancient Indian practice, said the prison chief responsible for the programme. "There's a written and physical exam and those who excel will be given remission with respect to their performance," Maharashtra prison department spokesman told AFP.



UK House set to vote for Syria action

AFP, London

Britain's parliament looks set to vote in favour of joining air strikes on Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria yesterday despite angry exchanges which have exposed deep divisions on military action.

Prime Minister David Cameron kicked off over 10 hours of debate by urging MPs to "answer the call" from allies like France and the US, adding that bombing the "medieval monsters" of IS was "the right thing to do".

"The question is this: do we work with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat... or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us?" he told the House of Commons.

Ministers and sources in the main opposition Labour party believe Cameron will win the vote expected at around 2230 GMT, paving the way for Britain to join air strikes on Syria within days or even hours.

A YouGov poll in The Times newspaper found that 48 percent of Britons supported Syria strikes compared to 59 percent last week.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who opposes military action, condemned Cameron's move.

"The spectre of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya looms over this debate," Corbyn added, referring to unpopular British interventions in foreign conflicts over the last 15 years.

Cameron has wanted to extend Britain's role in the fight against IS for months but made a fresh push which led to the vote after last month's Paris attacks which killed 130 people.

Britain already has eight Tornado fighter jets plus drones involved in the US-led coalition striking IS targets in Iraq. However, it currently only conducts surveillance and intelligence missions over Syria.

The government will deploy more jets if the bombing is approved.

Military experts question how much difference Britain would make to the campaign, saying it may be more about wanting to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with allies like France and the United States.



Indian bystanders and travellers gather as floodwaters lap at the end of a highway in Chennai yesterday. Inset, flooded Chennai international airport. India has deployed troops to Tamil Nadu and closed the main airport there after heavy rains worsened weeks of flooding that has killed nearly 200 people in the southern coastal state. PHOTO: AFP

Iraq does not need foreign troops: PM

US to deploy special ops forces in Syria, Iraq

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Iraq does not need foreign ground troops to defeat the Islamic State group, after Washington announced it would deploy special forces to fight the jihadists.

Abadi did not directly reject the deployment, of which US Secretary of State John Kerry said Baghdad had been informed before the announcement, but he insisted that any operations be coordinated with the Iraqi government.

The presence of American ground forces is a contentious issue in Iraq, where the United States fought a nearly nine-year war, and it is politically expedient for Abadi to distance himself from the deployment.

"There is no need for foreign ground combat forces in Iraqi territory," Abadi said in a statement released late Tuesday in which he praised the performance of Iraqi special forces.

"The Iraqi government stresses that any military operation or presence of any foreign force, special or not, in any place in Iraq cannot be done without its approval and coordination with it," the statement said.

Defence Secretary Ashton Carter said Tuesday that the US was deploying a "special-

ised expeditionary targeting force" to Iraq to work alongside local forces against IS, which overran large parts of the country last year.

On Wednesday, Kerry said in Brussels that "the government of Iraq was of course briefed in advance of Secretary Carter's announcement".

Kerry also said Russia's role in Syria was welcome, as long as Moscow was focused only on IS. He also urged Nato allies to intensify the fight against IS, singling out Britain for praise as it looks set to join airstrikes against the jihadist group in Syria.

US-led coalition spokesman Colonel Steve Warren yesterday said the new special forces deployment would number roughly 100 personnel, and that it had been discussed with Abadi.

Though the new special forces troops will be based in Iraq, they will have the ability to also conduct raids across the border into northern Syria.

Abadi's remarks came a day after he said that Iraq has enough forces to defeat IS, an apparent response to a proposal by US senators to triple the number of American forces in the country.

Meanwhile, Syria's president Bashar al-Assad yesterday said Russia's involvement in his country's war has led to significant

INTERNAL FEUD

Afghan Taliban chief 'seriously wounded'

AFP, Kabul

Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour was seriously injured in a firefight following a heated argument at a gathering of militant commanders, officials said yesterday, exposing deepening divisions within the fractious militant movement.

Four Taliban gunmen were killed in the gunfight after an argument on the outskirts of Quetta, a source said.

Another report said Mullah Mansour died but this is unconfirmed. A Taliban spokesman denied the gunfight happened.

Mansour's appointment prompted splits in the Taliban after its founder Mullah Omar's death emerged in July. A number of senior Taliban leaders refused to pledge allegiance to him and a faction opposed to him was set up last month under Mullah Rasool.

The Taliban source said the firing seemed to be spontaneous rather than planned. What prompted the shooting in Quetta is unclear.

'Erdogan involved in IS oil trade'

Russia ups ante against Turkey; Montenegro gets Nato invite

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday accused Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his family of involvement in illegal oil trading with Islamic State jihadists, ratcheting up the heat in a dispute over Ankara's downing of one of Moscow's warplanes.

The inflammatory allegations -- the latest in a ferocious war of words -- came as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he had agreed to meet his Turkish counterpart for the first high-level face-to-face talks since the incident last week.

President Vladimir Putin has already accused Ankara of downing the jet to protect the oil supply lines to Turkish territory. But the defence ministry accusations against Erdogan are the first implicating the Turkish strongman directly, as the Kremlin refuses to let the pressure drop after slapping economic sanctions on Ankara.

"The main consumer of this oil stolen from its legitimate owners Syria and Iraq is Turkey," deputy defence minister Anatoly Antonov told journalists at a packed briefing. "According to available information, the highest level of the political leadership of the country, president Erdogan and his family, are involved in this criminal business."

Erdogan had dismissed earlier Russian claims insisting he would resign if allegations were proved true.

Nato yesterday invited Montenegro to become the 29th member of the US-led military alliance.

Russia quickly said it would be forced to react to Nato's expansion eastward, with the invitation to the small Balkan country adding to bad blood between Moscow and the West over a host of issues including Ukraine.

Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said he expected Montenegro's accession talks to be completed early next



WAR ON TERROR Russian intervention 'slowing down IS': Assad Kerry urges Nato to 'step up' IS fight, praises Britain

Richest 10pc 'produce half of world's CO2'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The enormity of climate-change inequality has been laid bare by new research showing that the richest 1 per cent of the world's population produces 175 times as much CO2 per person as the bottom 10 per cent.

With the serious business of negotiation beginning at the UN Climate Change summit in Paris, Oxfam have published a report showing that, despite the rich causing most of the global warming, it is the poor that must bear the brunt of the consequences.

The richest tenth of the world's population produce half the CO2 emissions, while the poorest half generate just 10 per cent of them, the Oxfam report says.

"Climate change and economic inequality are inextricably linked and together pose one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century," said Oxfam's head of food and climate policy Tim Gore.

"Paris must be the start of building a more human economy for all, not just for the 'haves' - the richest and highest emitters - but also for the 'have-nots' - the poorest people who are the least responsible for, and most vulnerable, to climate change."

The majority of the world's poorest people live in the developing world, where the impact of global warming will generally be much greater - a problem compounded by the lack of money to deal with the problem. But climate-change inequalities also exist within countries in both the developed and the developing world, the report says.

"Rich, high emitters should be held accountable for their emissions, no matter where they live," said Gore. "But it's easy to forget that rapidly developing economies are also home to the majority of the world's very poorest people, and while they have to do their fair share, it is the rich countries that should still lead the way."

Oxfam called on world leaders to ensure any deal in Paris included money to help poor countries pay for damage from the increase in extreme



WFP warns about climate refugees

Says global warming will have dire effect on world hunger

AGENCIES

The head of the World Food Program is warning that hunger linked to climate change may worsen mass migrations, and is hoping for an ambitious international accord to slow global warming.

Ertharin Cousin told The Associated Press that people "will move if they don't have enough to eat." Speaking yesterday at the climate talks in Paris, she says "food insecurity anywhere is a security challenge everywhere."

Cousin says the UN food agency cannot fulfill its promises to eradicate hunger without a global climate accord, and investment in preventive measures such as drought-resistant seeds and water-conserving agriculture.

Man-made global warming is causing worsening droughts and floods that are threatening traditional food sources, she said - especially in the poorest countries, where hunger is already a top problem.

WFP also warned that El Niños, climate change and increasing conflict linked to prolonged droughts and extreme weather leaving the world unable to cope with the food needs of millions of people.

The UN agency, which last year appealed for \$8.5bn from governments to provide food aid to people in 80 or more countries but only received \$5.5bn, said donors had never been more generous but that the challenges were now outpacing available funds

"The humanitarian system is increasingly stretched financially and operationally. Weather disasters require responses in more places and for longer periods," said the WFP

executive director, Ertharin Cousin, in Paris for the climate talks.

A WFP vulnerability map shows that, at present, Africa and Asia have hotspots of predictable vulnerability. But once data from the IPCC's fifth assessment report on climate change is factored in, the map turns darker and it is possible to see which countries will be most affected by temperature increases and extreme weather over the longer term.

If temperatures rise by only 2C, then millions more people would be affected across Central America, Africa and Asia. If



temperatures were to rise between 4C and 5C, the map becomes covered in hotspots - suggesting a semi-permanent food disaster in many parts of the world.

Cousin will not predict the cost of providing humanitarian food aid on a much larger scale, but accepts it is likely to be many tens of billions of dollars a year. "Climate change has the potential to reverse the whole development path," she says.

Cousin echoes the World Bank, which has linked conflict with climate. "The data suggests a definite link between food insecurity and conflict. Climate is an added

PAK SCHOOL MASSACRE 4 convicts hanged

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan yesterday hanged four men linked to the Taliban's massacre of more than 130 schoolchildren, with parents of victims saying they deserved "no forgiveness" as the attack anniversary approached.

The executions, which officials said were carried out yesterday morning at a prison in the northwestern city of Kohat, were the first in connection with the December 16 attack on an army-run school in the northwestern city of Peshawar. The army has put the final toll at 151 killed, 134 of them children.

A Kohat police official named the militants as Maulvi Abdus Salam, Hazrat Ali, Mujeeb Rehman and Sabeel, alias Yahya. Their role in the massacre has not been made public. The gunmen were all reported killed by security forces.

The attack was Pakistan's deadliest, and shocked and outraged a country already scared by nearly a decade of extremism. The attack prompted a nationwide crackdown on extremism, with the establishment of military courts and the resumption of capital punishment after a six-year moratorium.



Suu Kyi with Myanmar army chief Min Aung Hlaing

Suu Kyi in power transition talks

AFP, Naypyidaw

Myanmar's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi held talks yesterday with the president and military chief about the handover of power, the first such discussions since her opposition party's election triumph.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won nearly 80 percent of contested seats in a November 8 election.

Immediately after the poll she had appealed for "national reconciliation" talks with President Thein Sein and the powerful army chief.

Both men have congratulated her on the NLD's victory and vowed to ensure a smooth transition of power to an elected opposition - an unprecedented act in the country's history.

Yesterday morning, Suu Kyi spent 45 minutes in the capital Naypyidaw with Thein Sein.

Later Suu Kyi met the army chief Min Aung Hlaing for about an hour in another closed session.