

NEWS IN  
briefTerrorists may seek  
nuke material: IAEA

AFP, Manila

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency yesterday warned of the threat of terrorists getting their hands on radioactive material to make "dirty" bombs. Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said all countries should secure material which extremists could use to make such a device.

Israeli court jails  
Palestinian MP

AFP, Jerusalem

A prominent Palestinian lawmaker has been jailed for 15 months by an Israeli military court, the military confirmed yesterday. Khalida Jarrar, a senior member of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and a well-known political figure, was sentenced on Sunday at the Ofer military court near the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

Flights resume in  
flood-hit Chennai

BBC ONLINE

Flights have resumed in the southern Indian city of Chennai (Madras) after a week of devastating floods. A massive relief operation is continuing to get food and medicines to tens of thousands of people. Many residents are still living in shelters. Key services like power supply and the railways are also functioning as flood waters have receded in some areas.

Plane lands in Hungary  
after bomb scare

AFP, Budapest

A German passenger plane headed from Berlin to the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Hurghada landed in Budapest yesterday after a bomb scare, Hungarian police said. The airport.hu website reported that on approaching Belgrade, pilots decided to turn back the Airbus A321-211 operated by airline Condor carrying 130 passengers and seven staff and land in Budapest.

New Yemen peace  
talks to start on Dec 15

AFP, Geneva

Warring factions in Yemen will relaunch peace talks on December 15, the UN envoy to the embattled country said yesterday, voicing confidence that a temporary ceasefire will be in place before negotiations begin. Talks to ease the violence in Yemen have been stalled for months, with the conflict escalating since March.



Syrian civilians and rebel fighters remove a girl and search for other victims amid the rubble of a building following a reported air strike by Syrian government forces on the Sukkari neighbourhood of Syria's Aleppo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Alliance won't send  
ground troops: Nato

AGENCIES

Nato has ruled out sending ground troops to fight against Islamic State militants in Syria, Nato General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg told a Swiss newspaper, stressing the need to bolster local forces in the conflict.

"That is not on the agenda of the coalition and the Nato allies," he told the Tages-Anzeiger paper when asked about dispatching ground forces to accompany air strikes, reports Reuters.

"The United States has a limited number of special forces. In the foreground, however, is strengthening local forces. This is not easy, but it's the only option," he added.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said yesterday that most oil smuggled by the Islamic State group goes through Turkey, joining a chorus of countries linking it with the jihadists' financing.

During a meeting with Germany's visiting foreign minister, Abadi stressed the "importance of stopping oil smuggling by (IS)

terrorist gangs, the majority of which is smuggled via Turkey," a statement from his office said.

Syria expressed outrage yesterday after a suspected US-led coalition strike for the first time killed regime troops, but the coalition denied its warplanes hit an army base.

In a letter to the United Nations Security Council and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Syria's foreign ministry condemned what it called a "flagrant aggression" that killed at least three soldiers late on Sunday.

It said three Syrian soldiers were killed and 13 wounded in strikes by four coalition planes on an army camp in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, flights to and from two northern Iraqi airports were suspended for 48 hours for the second time in roughly two weeks due to Russian strikes in Syria, officials said yesterday. The directors of the Arbil and Sulaimaniyah airports in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region both said that flights had been suspended due to danger posed by Russian cruise missiles

## WAR ON TERROR

IS smuggles majority of  
oil via Turkey: Iraq PMSyria accuses US-led coalition  
of killing regime troopsRussian strikes again  
halt north Iraq flights

## CALIFORNIA SHOOTING

Malik attended  
Pak madrasa

AFP, Multan

The woman who along with her husband shot dead 14 people in California last week attended one of Pakistan's most high-profile religious seminaries for women, the madrasa confirmed to AFP yesterday.

Tashfeen Malik, 29, was enrolled in 2013 at the Al-Huda Institute in Multan, which targets middle-class women seeking to come closer to Islam and also has offices in the US, the UAE, India and the UK, said Imran Amir, an administration official at the seminary.

The institute has no known extremist links, though it has come under fire in the past from critics who say its ideology echoes that of the Taliban.

But her attendance offers fresh insight into Malik's journey towards Islamic extremism. This likely began with her upbringing in Saudi Arabia, continued during her time as a student in Pakistan and culminated with her swearing allegiance to the Islamic State group shortly before embarking on her killing spree.

Malik and her husband Syed Farook, 28, were hailed as "soldiers" of the self-proclaimed caliphate following the massacre on Wednesday at a social services centre in San Bernardino.

Investigators suspect that Malik, who went to the United States on a fiancée's visa and spent extended periods of time in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, may have radicalised her

TERROR THREAT TO UK  
Knife attack raises  
climate of doubt

THE HINDU ONLINE

If the United Kingdom had the same gun laws as the United States, as observers in London were quick to point out, the attack on commuters in Leytonstone station on Saturday night by a knife-wielding man who reportedly shouted "This is for Syria" could have been carnage.

As it turned out, the man knifed one person, who suffered serious but not life threatening injuries, and two others who fortunately sustained only minor injuries before the police overpowered the attacker.

The security forces are treating the incident on Saturday night as a "terrorist incident", said Commander Richard Walton, head of Counter-Terrorism Command in the Metropolitan Police. "The threat from terrorism remains as severe, which means that a terrorist attack is highly likely."

While the IS links of the attacker are under investigation – including if, like the San Bernardino killers, he was self-radicalised – the UK medianscape on Sunday morning was alive with discussions on whether the incident was a consequence of the House of Commons vote last week in support of Britain bombing Syria. One of the issues why many MPs voted against airstrikes was precisely because it would further compromise the security scenario in Britain.

John Cryer, Labour MP for the east London constituency in which Leytonstone station falls, and who voted against airstrikes, does not draw that conclusion. He told BBC's Sunday Politics that it would be "dangerous" to link the vote and its outcome to the attack. "We just don't know at the moment. But there doesn't seem to be immediate evidence that there is a direct link."



"I am opposed to the airstrikes not because of its direct consequences, which seems to be the primary basis of most of the opposition, but because I see it as displacement action from the real problem by western governments," said Professor Bill Durodie, Professor and Chair of International Relations at the University of Bath, whose research focuses on risk, resilience, radicalisation and the politics of fear. "In many ways, the real crisis is the domestic crisis. I do think IS needs to be defeated, but more in terms of the battle of ideas," he told The Hindu.

The uncertainties in the public mind appear to have only increased, with several opinion polls showing popular opposition in the UK to airstrikes only increasing after the vote.

British aircraft meanwhile completed a second and more deadly series of airstrikes. According to a Ministry of Defence statement eight strikes were conducted by Tornado GR4s and Typhoon FGR4s that used Paveway IV guided bombs to hit wellheads "thus cutting off the terrorists' oil



French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, hold apples marked with the logo of COP21 during a meeting at Le Bourget, near Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## INDO-PAK TALKS

Swaraj to visit  
Islamabad today

NDTV ONLINE

First there was the icebreaker in Paris between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif. Then the thaw in Bangkok with the National Security Adviser level talks. And now, foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj is leaving for Islamabad today to attend a conference on Afghanistan.

The minister will meet her Pakistani counterpart Sartaj Aziz and call on Sharif.

"It is too early to say what the result of our mutual dialogue will be," Aziz told the media in Islamabad. "For this you will have to wait for two more days, but it is a good start. The deadlock on negotiations has been lifted to some point, and we have to hope that the talks continue."

The Congress has attacked the government for the secrecy surrounding Sunday's Bangkok meeting between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and his Pakistani counterpart Nasir Janjua. Swaraj may make a statement in Parliament when she returns from Pakistan. "There was a meeting too between NaMo and Nawaz Sharif at the climate change talk," Congress' Anand Sharma told Rajya Sabha.

## VENEZUELA POLLS

Opposition  
wins majority

AFP, Caracas

Venezuela's opposition won control of congress for the first time in 16 years yesterday as voters punished the socialist government for an economic crisis and insecurity in the oil-rich nation.

President Nicolas Maduro promptly accepted the defeat, a blow to his leadership and the "revolution" of "21st century socialism" launched by his late predecessor Hugo Chavez.

The result was a triumph for the center-right opposition, which has struggled for years for a foothold and has seen many of its leaders jailed.

The Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) coalition won a majority of 99 out of 167 seats in the state legislature, the head of the National Electoral Council (CNE), Tibisay Lucena, announced shortly after midnight, five hours after polls closed.

Fireworks erupted over the capital Caracas as opposition supporters celebrated. "Venezuela has won," tweeted Henrique Capriles, leader of one of the parties in MUD.

It was unclear, however, how far the MUD will be able to push its advantage in congress to force a change of course or even to get rid of Maduro, who vowed to push on with his socialist programs.

"We have come with our morals and our ethics to recognize these adverse results, to accept them and to say to our Venezuela that the constitution and democracy have triumphed," the 53-year-old said in a televised address.

"We have lost a battle today, but the struggle to build a new society is just beginning."

African nations aim  
to restore forest

AFP, Le Bourget

A coalition of African countries and donors unveiled an ambitious initiative on the sidelines of a crunch UN climate conference Sunday to restore 100 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030.

Called the African Restoration Initiative (AFR100), the project aims nurturing forest regrowth that becomes a powerful "carbon sink" absorbing climate-altering carbon dioxide, and provides a livelihood for the rural poor.

Ten African countries, nine financial partners and 10 technical support partners have pledged support.

Backers include the African Union (AU), the German ministry for economic cooperation and development and the World Resources Institute (WRI), a US non-profit group.

"The scale of these new restoration commitments is unprecedented," said Wanjira Mathai, chair of the Green Belt Movement which is seeking to combat desertification and forest degradation in Africa, and daughter of the movement's founder, Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai.

"I have seen restoration in communities both large and small across Africa, but the promise of a continent-wide movement is truly inspiring. Restoring landscapes will empower and enrich rural communities will providing downstream benefits to those in cities. Everybody wins."

WRI said 10 African countries had agreed to join the AFR100 initiative: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Togo and Uganda.

These countries have already committed to restore more than 30 million ha., "and partners, including the World Bank, are earmarking more than \$1 billion (920 million euros) in development finance and \$540 million in private-sector impact investment to support these activities," the WRI said in a statement.

The AFR100 initiative also backs the 2011 Bonn Declaration of restoring 150 million ha. of land by 2020, and the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests, which extends the objective to 350 million ha. by 2030.

The scheme was announced on the sidelines of a conference of the 195-nation UN Framework Convention on Climate

Beijing issues  
red alert for  
pollution

AFP, Beijing

China's capital issued its first-ever red alert for pollution yesterday, as a new blanket of choking smog was projected to descend on the city.

From today, half of Beijing's private cars will be ordered off the road, with an odd-even number plate system in force, and 30 percent of government vehicles also garaged.

Outdoor construction sites will cease operations, but only some industrial plants will have to "implement measures to limit or stop production", said Beijing's Environmental Protection Bureau on its verified social media account, adding that fireworks and barbecues were also banned.

"People should to the best of their ability reduce outdoor activities," it said. "If you are engaging in outdoor activities you should wear a mask or take other protective measures."

Kindergartens, primary and middle schools were urged to close, it added, without explicitly making the measures mandatory.

Talks necessary with  
IS: Dalai Lama

AFP, Rome

The Islamic State (IS) group harms Islam through its intolerance, but "dialogue" with the jihadists is vital, the Dalai Lama said in an interview reported yesterday by the Italian daily La Stampa.

"Islam is a religion of peace. Those who are intolerant harm their own faith and their own brothers," the Tibetan spiritual leader was quoted as saying in Bangalore, southern India, where he took part in a seminar on peace and the economy.

Even so, "there has to be dialogue, with IS as well," the Dalai Lama said, in remarks reported in Italian.

Asked how this should be achieved, he replied, "Through dialogue. One has to listen, to understand, to have respect for the other person, regardless. There is no other way."

A US-led coalition and Russia have vowed to crush the IS, also called ISIS, ISIL or Daesh, which monitors say has carried out executions, abductions and rapes in areas under its control in Iraq and Syria, and conducted a wave of terror operations abroad.

The Islamic State group is pulling in some \$80 million a month, mainly from levies and confiscations, but is struggling financially as strikes hit its oil infrastructure, analysis firm IHS said yesterday.

In a new report, IHS Conflict Monitor said that IS, unlike other jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda, does not need to rely on foreign funding as it can count on revenues from the large parts of Syria and Iraq under its control.

Using open source intelligence including social media and sources inside the countries, IHS said it estimates the group's overall monthly income to be around \$80 million (75 million euros) as of late 2015.

About half the revenues come from levies and confiscations, with IS slapping a 20 percent charge on all services, IHS said. Some 43 percent comes from oil sales and the rest from drug smuggling, electricity sales and donations.

